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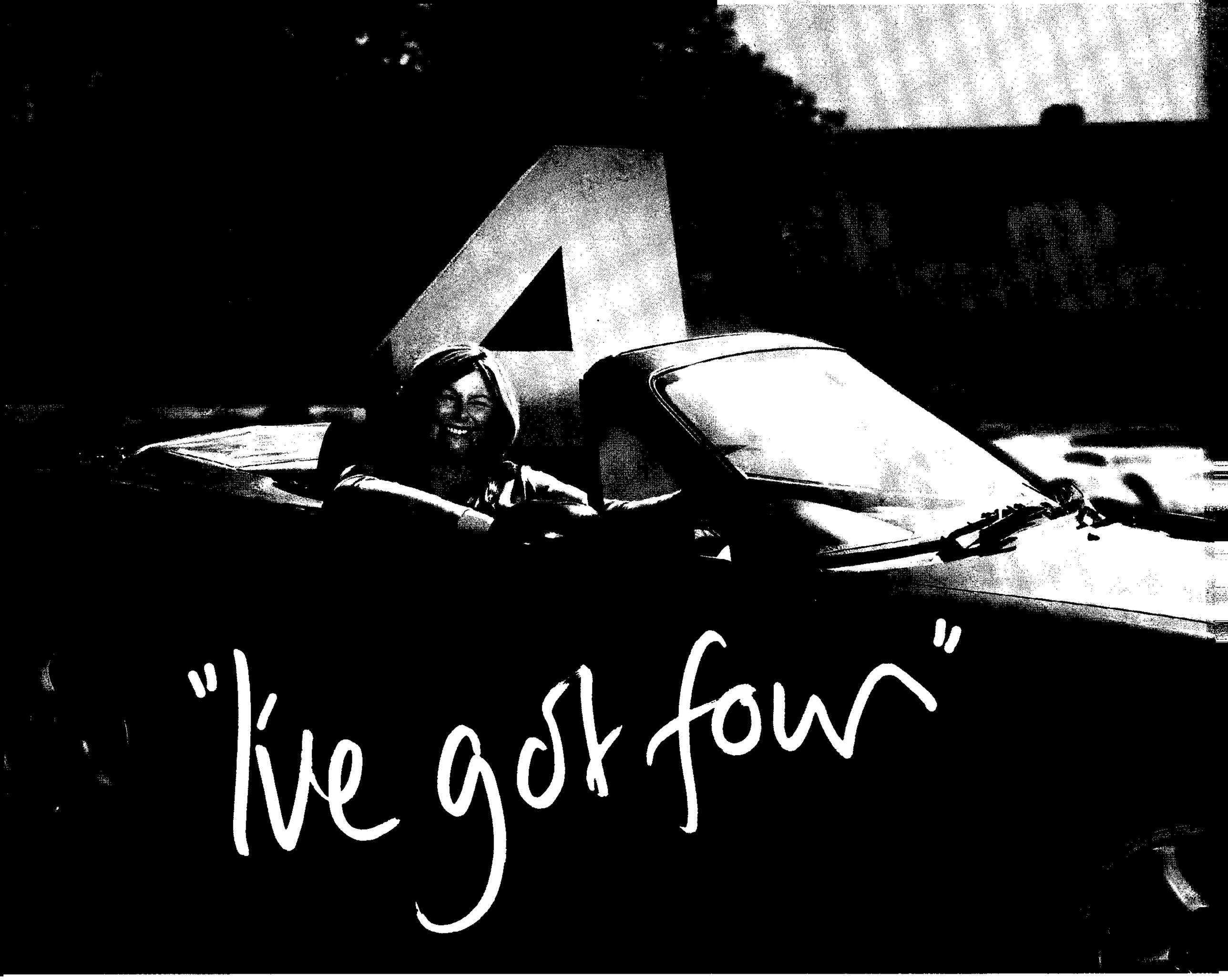

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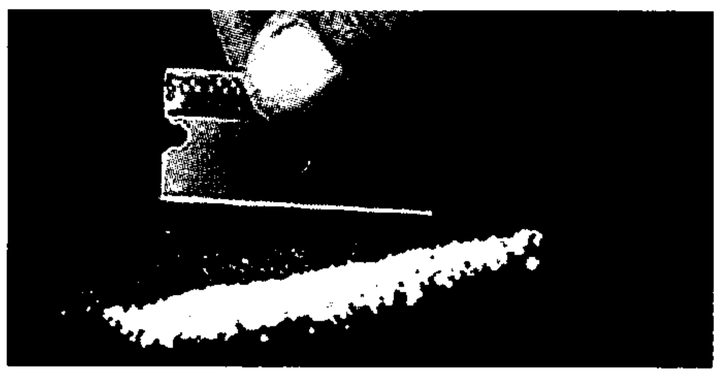
Gnome

THE criticism of my decision to appoint Miss Kate Moss as the Chief Designer of my fashion outlet Yobshop (a division of British Gnome Stores) is entirely misplaced. Contrary to reports that the previous designer Miss Sue Shortly had refused to work with Miss Moss, may I make it clear that the two women were perfectly happy to work together – except one of them who then resigned.

Although Miss Moss has never designed clothes before, she has worn a few. Miss Moss has flair, imagination and a wide knowledge of contemporary underwear. The suggestion that I am a pathetic old man who has got the hots for a top model in a short skirt is as contemptible as it is true.

Sir Phillip Gnome,
Yobshop,
Oxford Street.

Kate Moss's New Line



The next issue will celebrate our 45th Anniversary with a special 8-page supplement featuring the editor's choice of covers from the last twenty years

EDITORIAL
6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.
Tel: 020 7437 4017. Fax: 020 7437 0705.
Email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk
Website: www.private-eye.co.uk

PRIVATE EYE SUBSCRIPTIONS/SALES
PO Box 326, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8FA.
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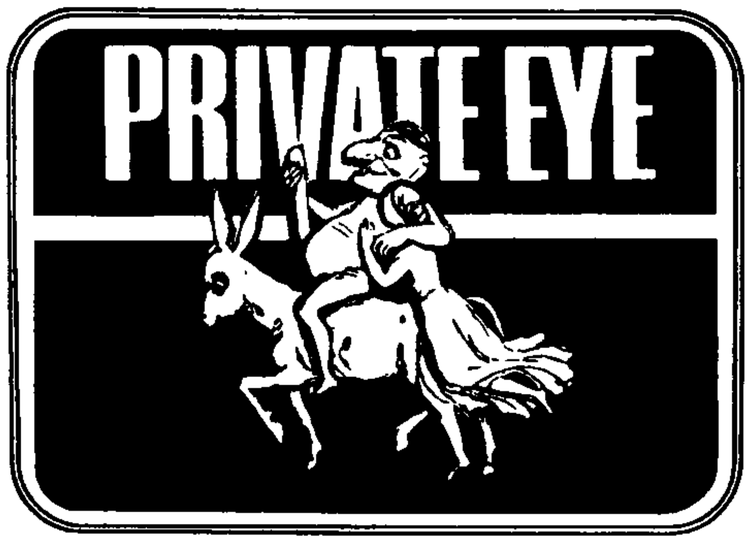

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TONY BLAIR picked a fitting example in his valedictory conference speech to demonstrate New Labour's record on public services. "In the last few months I've seen new hospitals like University College in London..." he drooled.

Last year University College Hospitals Trust was singled out for criticism by foundation trusts regulator Bill Moyes after racking up a £17m deficit partly because of "higher than anticipated facilities management costs" under its new private finance initiative scheme.

The contract, with an official "capital value" of £422m, will in fact see the trust pay more than £2bn to the consortium behind the deal – New Labour favourites Amec, Balfour Beatty and Interserve – according to Department of Health figures. The bulk will go on precisely the "facilities management" fees that are already proving so onerous.

Consultants KPMG have been called in to "turnaround" the trust's financial problems, ie cut services, their rivals PwC having advised on signing the deal in the first place (total fees running into millions). The £2bn bill itself will still be being paid long after the PM has hit the international lecture circuit. A finer monument to Blair's Britain is harder to imagine...

"WHO are all these people being quoted in the papers who claim to be 'close' to me?" wonders David Blunkett in his newly published diaries, complaining about the press interest in his private life.

He of all people should know the answer. Take the *Observer* story that appeared in 2004 shortly before the official inquiry into his fast-tracking of a visa for Kimberly Quinn's nanny. It quoted a "friend" of Blunkett defending him as a "working class lad who's the voice of ordinary people" and who had been the victim of an orchestrated campaign by an "American millionaires". The Labour press office issued an instant denial, saying that "neither David Blunkett nor anyone who speaks with his authority has said this".

When the paper threatened to release its tape recording of the conversation, however, Labour withdrew its rebuttal – as well it might, since the voice on the tape was that of Blunkett himself.

Meanwhile, we wait with interest to see if the book version of his diaries (due out next week) sheds any light on the story that started it all, a *News of the World* splash in August 2004 revealing that "Home secretary David Blunkett is having a secret affair with a married woman".

The article, which refrained from naming Kimberly Quinn was remarkably sympathetic. An accompanying editorial noted that it showed him as a "very human" figure. "Indeed, he is undoubtedly the right man for his exacting job with an impressive record of achievements and a natural empathy for ordinary people."

This has been the line pursued by News International titles ever since, thanks to Blunkett's friendship with figures such as Rebekah Wade and Elisabeth Murdoch. More usefully still, Blunkett's Home Office special adviser at the time, Kath Raymond, was the lover of News International's executive chairman, Les Hinton.

In a radio interview at the time of Blunkett's 2004 resignation, *Sun* political supremo Trevor Kavanagh alluded to suspicions that the original story was "put into the public domain as a result of Blunkett's own intervention, to put pressure on Kimberly Quinn". No doubt the suspicions were unjustified; but where *did* the story come from?

GORDON BROWN's request that Tony Blair drop the Alastair Campbell-penned "at least I know she's not going to run off with the bloke next door" line from his conference speech may have been ignored, but the chancellor made damn sure that no joke was allowed to slip from his own lips at the podium at Manchester.

The first draft of Brown's speech featured a series of gags, including the rib-tickler "Tony and I used to be Lennon and McCartney – now we're Lenin and Stalin!" Every one was extracted from the draft by the stony-faced chancellor and binned.

IT WAS bizarre enough when the government announced that Mapeley had been shortlisted to buy the government estate in Northern Ireland, given the *Eye*'s exposure of the "STEPS" PFI contract under which the company bought Britain's tax offices through a Bermudan company five years ago.

But now the Mapeley man who dreamt up the disastrous scheme... has been given the job of advising the government on flogging off its buildings in the province!

The *Belfast Telegraph* has discovered that Robin Priest, the Mapeley founder and chief executive until May 2004, is now the "senior engagement partner" for Deloitte, the Northern Ireland Office's lead adviser on the plans. Never mind that Deloitte itself should have been disqualified from the job after advising the Revenue on the disastrous STEPS contract – famously assuring the Revenue, in the words of credulous former chairman Sir Nicholas Montagu, that selling tax offices to tax havens was "entirely normal".

Not that Priest was too keen on advertising the offshore chicanery. A parliamentary committee found that "Mapeley had always intended to hold the properties offshore to avoid paying tax. Yet the company was less than open with the departments, only making its intentions known... very late in the procurement process".

The STEPS deal, many times more expensive than planned, was an object lesson in how *not* to do a PFI deal: a spurious winning bid; costs many times what they should be (and much more than the public sector alternative); tax dodging; and, as set out in Paul Foot's special report *The Artful Dodgers* (May 2003, issue 1080), lies to parliament and public. In the parallel universe that is PFI, no surprise then that the "brains" behind it bags a taxpayer-funded consultancy contract to do it all over again!

"I know! We'll attack Iran"

Street Of Shame

WILL LEWIS's appointment as editor of the *Daily Telegraph* marks the final victory of the digital nerds at the new HQ in Victoria over the antediluvian hacks of Canary Wharf who cling to the notion that the *Telegraph* is a newspaper which requires the services of reporters and sub-editors.

As the digital nerds' generalissimo, Lewis is the man who has been burbling on about podcasts, click 'n' carry downloads and "touchpoints". (A way of "triggering different forms of content" for online readers according to their advertising demographics, apparently.) As editor, he at last has the toy box all to himself.

Lewis is the boy wonder who was recruited a few months ago as business editor but soon morphed into managing director (editorial), in charge of the *Telegraph* titles' imminent move to their new "hub". The Canary Wharf troops meanwhile were led by John Bryant – nominally acting editor but increasingly bypassed before his total eclipse this week. Bryant will now return to his old job as editor in chief of the Telegraph Group; but his status was starkly revealed two weeks ago when he paid an official visit to the new digital HQ. "Er, where's my office?" he asked. There wasn't one as Lewis hadn't bothered to accommodate him. Whether Bryant now moves into the hastily constructed cubby-hole builders were told to knock up for him remains to be seen.

THE podcasts vs. paper battle is not the only one raging at the once venerable title. The *Torygraph* also seems to be in the grip of a class war that has cost several foreign correspondents their jobs.

"What the fucking hell is going on?" new foreign editor Con Coughlin yelled down the phone to his Washington correspondent Alec Russell three weeks ago.

Coughlin, a rough-hewn Essex boy, is openly contemptuous of "the floppy-haired brigade" – young chaps from public school and Oxbridge who were recruited by Charles "Lord Snooty" Moore. They include New York correspondent Harry Mount, son of Sir Ferdinand Mount Bt, and Alec Russell.

Russell's fate was sealed on the night of 14 September when Coughlin noticed a report in the next day's *Times* about an American woman who committed suicide after being accused by a TV presenter of being responsible for the death of her two-year-old son. When Coughlin rang Russell to ask why he hadn't covered the affair, the fastidious hack replied that it wasn't his job to do human-interest stories – thus prompting Coughlin's "fucking hell" riposte.

Even more fastidiously, Russell then wrote a letter to acting editor Bryant protesting at the use of the f-word. "The Washington boys have declared war on me!" Coughlin roared – and promptly sacked both Russell and his Washington colleague, Francis Harris.

The only beneficiaries from all this bloodletting are the bartenders of Canary Wharf: drunken leaving parties are now an almost daily event. Oh, and the lawyers of course: several recent victims, including ex-foreign editor Alan Philps and comment editor Stephen Robinson, are said to be consulting m'learned friends.

THE curious incident of the autism accusation in the night grows curiouser and curiouser. But who was the first to insult Gordon Brown in this way?

It wasn't shadow Chancellor George Osborne speaking in Bournemouth last week; and nor was it *Sunday Times* columnist Robert Harris who last month referred to Brown and a kind of "political Asperger's syndrome". So was it *Times* columnist Anatole Kaletsky writing on 7 September about the chancellor's "brooding, almost autistic personality"? No. Or the *Times*'s Mary Anne Sieghart, the only person to use the word during the fringe discussion that ignited the row? Wrong again! Er… what about the *Independent*'s Simon Carr who noted in May that "Mr Brown answers questions in that autistic way he has"? No. The first man publicly to insult Brown in this way was the compassionate Conservative Simon Heffer, who in the *Telegraph* on 19 November last wrote: "Gordon Brown of course refuses arrogantly and ignorantly even to put on a black tie when he goes to official dinners… for reasons that I have never heard satisfactorily explained, but are, I presume, down to his almost autistic rudeness." Sensitive or what?

HAPPILY the severe belt tightening at the *Financial Times* which saw 54 hacks made redundant at the end of September has not affected the directors.

On the very day *FT* chairman Sir David Bell attended a leaving party for the 54 victims he was awarded 16,480 shares by the newspaper's owners, Pearson, under a little-known scheme applying only to directors which was set up five years ago.

Bell immediately sold 6,757 shares to pay the tax leaving him with a gift of 9,723 shares, worth around £75,000 in addition to his salary and bonuses which last year totalled £972,000. Bell now owns 122,518 Pearson shares worth more than £900,000.

The *FT*'s chief executive, Rona Fairhead, and former finance director John Makinson, who now heads up Penguin, each received the same number of shares as Bell while group chief executive Dame Marjorie Scardino was awarded 24,040.

Angry hacks who fear another wave of cost cutting are demanding to know from Pearson's almost invisible chairman, Glen Moreno, how a scheme could exist that suddenly throws shares worth more than £500,000 at four directors when the company is doing so badly.

Meanwhile, on the same day that the HR department was preparing P45s for the redundant hacks, many of the company's catering staff were tied up serving at a lavish party in the boardroom – hosted by Bell, attended by the great and the good, paid for by the *FT* – to celebrate a milestone in the newspaper's history: Sir David's 60th birthday.

"I AM simply delighted at joining the *Sun* and hope to entertain you by writing on a wide range of subjects – anything under the *Sun* in fact," quipped Anila Baig when her appointment as the first female Muslim journalist on the paper was trumpeted under the headline: "Introducing a New Voice in the *Sun*".

It didn't quite work out like that – two years on, Baig's only regular berth is the "What to Watch Tonight" column on the paper's TV pages. This week, however, Baig finally achieved her first front page with the tale of the "security shambles" which allowed her to "breach airport security wearing a Muslim-style veil".

It appeared under the byline "Exclusive by Julie Moult."

"SOMETIMES the journey is the hardest part." So began a report by *Sunday Times* football hack Rob Hughes on last month's European qualifier between Wales and the Czech republic in Teplice. The Welsh team had played in a "composed, brave and solid" fashion despite alarms and delays during their flight to Prague.

But what of Hughes's own journey? Despite his long eyewitness account of the match in Teplice, complete with picture byline, none of the other hacks there saw him at the ground or indeed in the hotel. Did he venture any further than the TV set in his living-room back in Blighty?

Hadrian's Wallchart

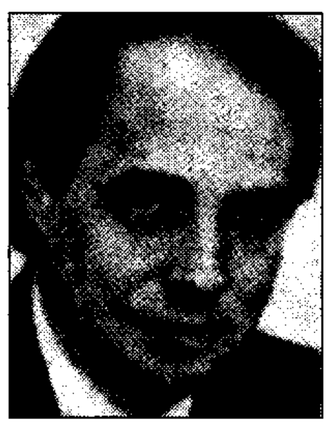
FEW comradely feelings among *New Statesman* hacks at the Labour conference in Manchester.

Despite lavishing vast sums on the mag's annual conference booze-up, editor John Kampfner pleaded poverty when it came to accommodation. Everyone would have to slum it, he explained.

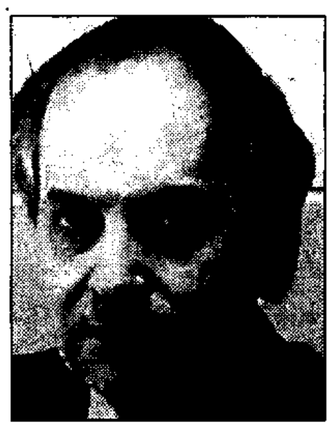
Political editor Martin Bright was duly exiled to a cheap Alan Partridge-style roadhouse miles from anywhere where he couldn't even get a connection for his computer. But where was Kampfner himself? Ensonced in the main conference hotel, the Midland, with ministers and media grandees.

As soon as he discovered his editor's perfidy, Bright stormed out of the roadhouse and returned to London forthwith.

JUST FANCY THAT



Stephen Glover
DAILY MAIL
25 September 2006



Stephen Glover
INDEPENDENT
25 September 2006

"OVER THE COUNTER KILLER" shrieked a headline in the *News of the World* on 10 September, over the news that "terrorists hell-bent on mid-air murder can track EVERY aeroplane in the sky armed with a 'virtual computer radar' readily available on the internet."

"Hooked up to a laptop or PC the British-made gadget replicates exactly what flight controllers see on their monitors. And chillingly, all the information is relayed LIVE," the paper revealed. "It could have potentially horrendous implications. A *News of the World* reporter was able to easily buy the £499 scanner from a leading specialist shop. Staff did not inquire why we wanted it or what we intended to use it for."

And what did the intrepid hacks do with this deadly piece of kit once they had finished with it? Why they flogged it off on eBay, of course! "press_snapper" put the gadget – "used for demonstration purposes (News of the World story) but like new" – up for sale on the auction site, where it fetched a handsome £440 (plus £5p&p) on 23 September. The new proud owner? One "warbird-nl".

NO DOUBT editor Simon Kelner thought the *Indie*'s 20th birthday would fill the office with festive joy. Alas, it has provoked seething rancour and resentment among many *Indie* hacks, past and present.

His crime was to organise two birthday bashes. Star writers and executives enjoyed a grand champagne-and-canapés bash at Lancaster House last week, also attended by Gordon Brown and David Cameron. Lowlier galley-slaves had to make do with a beer-and-crisps bash in the Docklands Hilton. And, even more gallingly, some weren't invited to either event.

One such is Sarah Helm, who worked at the paper for many years as home affairs writer and then as a foreign correspondent. She now lives with Jonathan Powell, Tony Blair's chief of staff at No 10. Although the *Indie* invited Powell to the A-list party at Lancaster House, Helm – one of the paper's founding hacks – was pointedly excluded.

THE *Independent*'s obituary of its former higher-education correspondent Ngaio Crequer last week paid handsome tribute to her talents as "one of the most brilliant education journalists of her generation… afraid of nothing and nobody, including editors". It noted that "more than one career hit the buffers as a result of her determined probing".

No doubt it was shortage of space that prevented the authors from describing how her own career hit the buffers thanks to, er, the *Independent*. Along with scores of other hacks she was summarily dismissed in 1994 during one of David "Rommel" Montgomery's hack-culls. Her career in ruins, she ended up teaching English as a foreign language.

NINE days after its special Africa edition guest-edited by Giorgio Armani (which sold 9,000 fewer copies than the previous Thursday's edition), the *Independent* offered readers a gushing "World Report" on 30 September to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Botswana's independence from the UK.

Produced by "international communications agency" World Report Inc, it was full of the usual glowing PR drivel, including unfettered praise for the diamond company De Beers, whose relationship with the Botswana government is apparently "rare and precious like the stone they are dedicated to."

Readers were invited to visit, and experience the "unique dances and songs which are presented every year… from the San. More commonly known as the Bushmen, they are only a part of the large cultural umbrella that is developing within the ministry's plan of diversification."

Alas, this plan involves forcibly evicting the San from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve and placing them in resettlement camps, a fact not mentioned. Nor was it noted that the government's chums at De Beers have applied to mine within the game reserve. The media in Botswana were recently ordered to use only "positive government statements" when reporting the topic – the subject of the longest-running court case in Botswana's history. How nice to see the *Independent* falling into line!

NO FEWER than 12 pages of last weekend's *Sindie* were devoted to depression. "It feels like a turning point," an editorial claimed. "There is, however, much further to go. The *Independent on Sunday*'s campaign for better understanding of mental illness… is a long way from reaching its goals."

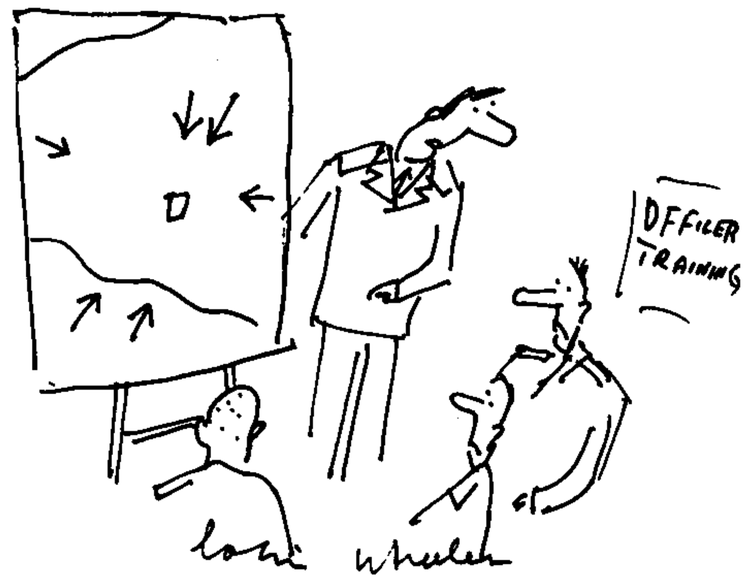
Indeed. One article in last Sunday's special issue described the suicide of teenager Douglas Moreton. "Dave and Trish Moreton believe the cannabis their son smoked made his depression worse," it reported. "Police chiefs are considering reversing their softly-softly approach to the drug because of links to mental illness in the young."

Alas, there was no room to mention that the softly-softly approach to cannabis laws followed another long and vigorous campaign by… the *Independent on Sunday*.

EXPERT at discerning instances in which she has been racially discriminated against, in the week new employment legislation was introduced, *Independent* columnist Yasmin Alibhai-Brown recently revealed that she had also been the victim of a shocking example of ageism in action.

"Recently I bumped into an infamous Tory lothario at the BBC *Daily Politics* studio. I teasingly asked him why he had never attempted to seduce me – an attractive, sensual woman. I am in truth a committed monogamist but that doesn't mean I shouldn't be invited to be naughty. He was outraged, more I think by my age than my gall."

The thought that perhaps the chap in question might have been discriminating against her simply on the grounds that he didn't fancy her did not seem to have crossed her mind, but it might be best if the government could rush through some legislation to cover that eventuality too.



"Your machine gunner is dead, your platoon is surrounded and there is another critical editorial in the Guardian"

ONE year on from the *Guardian*'s Berliner redesign, how fare the editorial innovations trumpeted by editor Alan Rusbridger in his welcome letter to readers last September?

The "regular new columns by Maureen Lipman and Alex Kapranos" have both ceased, along with Marina Hyde's "Lost In Showbiz" page. The "full colour, stapled daily news magazine G2" and "redesigned and expanded Weekend magazine" have both jettisoned their editors and been extensively revamped. New diary editor Giles Foden lasted until January. The "unique in-depth graphic providing an instant briefing on one of the issues of the week" courtesy of "award-winning information design agency Grundy Northedge" disappeared in March. "Jones's Eye", a double-page spread in which the paper's art critic Jonathan Jones "dissects one of the week's defining images", appeared twice. And "Column Five", the front-page opinion piece which Rusbridger's salutatory note itself inaugurated, has appeared seven times in the past three months.

One other aspect of the relaunch also appears to have fallen by the wayside – the jump in readers. The latest figures show readership at 362,844 – nearly 5,000 fewer copies than were shifted (at full broadsheet size) in both March and April 2005.

"SUDDENLY the applause died as the prime minister announced that terrorism is unconnected to foreign policy, and only enemy propaganda would say otherwise," noted the *Guardian*'s Jonathan Freedland in his review of Tony Blair's speech at the Labour party conference on 27 September.

"When Blair said that a withdrawal from Iraq or Afghanistan would be 'a craven act of surrender', he said it to silence."

On page 6 of the same day's *Grauniad*, the paper's "clapometer" helpfully detailed that the phrase "a craven act of surrender" triggered 11.44 seconds of applause, more than the prime minister's comments on women MPs, civil partnerships, pensions or the smoking ban.

TO Richard Desmond, as we noted in the last *Eye*, even Richard Hammond's crash was a money-making opportunity, as Dirty Des invited *Daily Star* readers to send the hospitalised TV presenter a get-well text – at considerable expense to them and considerable profit to himself.

Incredibly Des has just taken his three millionth phone call on the *Star* rant lines which encourage readers to phone in and have their say on the issues of the day. ("Should Muslim ghettos be banned? Should UK let Muslims have more than one wife? Should all devil dogs be put down?") With 50p per call going straight into his own pockets, that's another £1.5m he has to find room for in his over-stuffed bank account.

But woe betide anyone else who tries to pull a similar trick! A thunderous leader in last Friday's *Daily Star* denounced the "blatant rip-off" perpetrated on this year's *Big Brother*, when viewers chose candidates for eviction only to see them later reintroduced to the house. Since Channel 4 had pocketed £3m from these premium-rate calls, it "should do the decent thing and organise a refund to those they cheated, or a donation to charity". Quite.

PS: The *Star* gloated over phone regulator Icstis's fining of the *Big Brother* producers claiming it was "a massive victory" for the rag which had run a "hard-hitting campaign over the show's 'fix' culture". But it was no such thing. The *Star* front pages in question – "Big Bro is Big Fix" and "BB Fix: Official Probe" – concerned the show's "Golden Ticket" draw, which had occurred nine weeks previously and had nothing to do with the Icstis investigation. The inquiry into that incident, by the Advertising Standards Authority, concluded that the draw was *not* fixed.

PPS: The *Star* illustrated its "story" with two big pictures of housemate Aisleyne. She had nothing to do with either incident but *was* posing in her knickers.

MORE on the off-field commercial activities of Kevin Pietersen. In *Eye* 1167 we revealed how the England cricketer persistently plugged the resort of Dubai in a *Guardian* interview without mentioning that he was paid as a "celebrity ambassador" to promote Dubai Properties.

Now, alas, it seems he has so many benefactors he can't remember them all. "I've always wanted a Porsche," he told *Observer Sport Monthly* last week, discussing his love of sports cars. "One day I rang [my agent and said], 'Can you get me a Porsche, please?' I had a 911 within two or three days."

Whoops! Pietersen is supposed to be a "brand ambassador" for Volkswagen which has provided him with a free Phaeton model for the last year.

JUST FANCY THAT!

FOLLOWING William Dalrymple's epic demolition of Michael Gove's new book *Celsius 7/7* in the *Sunday Times* – he termed it "a confused epic of simplistic incomprehension, riddled with more factual errors and misconceptions than any other text I have come across in two decades" and complained that "Gove has never lived in the Middle East, indeed has barely set foot in a Muslim country" – admirers of the author and Tory MP rushed to his defence.

"Mr Dalrymple's tone is intimidating. He gives the impression that he knows a lot," mused Frank Johnson in the *Spectator*. "But we must dare to question him. Churchill did not know German and never lived in a Germanic country; indeed barely set foot in one. But many believe he was right about Germany."

Three days later, biographer William Shawcross added his own ha'pennyworth in a letter to the *Sunday Times*. "Dalrymple seems to think that because Gove does not speak Islamic languages he (and I suppose almost everyone else in the west) is unqualified to analyse the Islamist threat. What nonsense," he observed. How so? "Churchill was no German scholar but he knew exactly what was going on in Germany in the 1930s…"

SO no hard feelings towards Accenture as it walks away from the NHS national IT programme. The man in charge of that contract, Accenture partner James Hall, has just been drafted in by the government... to head the Home Office's Identity and Passport Service where he will be responsible for bringing in identity cards!

The controversial ID scheme, set to cost tens of billions of pounds, might have been thought best put in objective hands; but Hall is nothing if not keen on huge public sector technology schemes.

As managing partner of what was then Andersen Consulting in the UK in the mid-90s, he was behind the disastrous NIRS2 system which went £165m over budget and cost the taxpayer £100m in compensation to pensioners whose benefits were screwed up. The deal was also highly criticised for handing valuable rights to the company for which it is still being paid (see *Eye* 1157).

Decisions on ID cards have been all but outsourced to Accenture, with Hall's appointment completing a hat-trick of crucial government positions for the consultants.

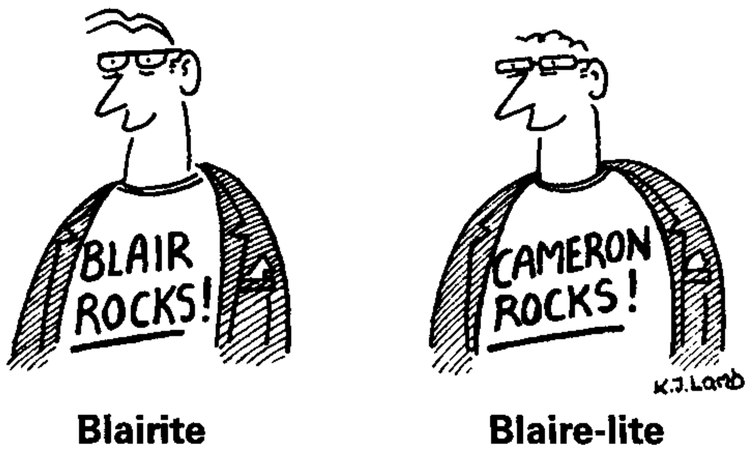
The Home Office minister responsible is Liam Byrne, a former Andersen consultant who did so much to bring his firm into the heart of government by providing seminars to ambitious New Labour politicians in 1996, and whose interests in seeing public cash go on IT can be surmised from the company he set up (and in which he still owns shares): E-Government Solutions Ltd. Then overseeing the government's IT plans is head of the Cabinet Office Delivery Unit Ian Watmore, another former Accenture partner.

With the government already looking for more consultants on the forthcoming technical phase of the ID scheme, Accenture can expect some lucrative work – especially now its top men are handing out the contracts.

IT'S always a pleasure to welcome back old friends, especially veteran *Eye* favourite and former Tory donor Christopher Moran. He and party treasurer Jonathan Marland are fellow directors of the property company at the centre of a row over the ownership of Conservative Central Office.

Moran has the unique distinction of being de-barred from Lloyds of London for life. He has also been the subject of numerous Stock Exchange inquiries and in 1991 was fined $500,000 in absentia by the Securities Exchange Commission in New York for insider trading. He was none too quick at coughing up either.

But Marland and the Tory party can rest at ease with any donations Moran may wish to offer them. The *Eye* has learned that he eventually – and very discreetly – divvied up the loot to the SEC in 1996 and is apparently free to travel to the US without fear of having his collar felt, at least on the insider dealing charges.



Blairite **Blaire-lite**

CALLED TO ORDURE

AGEIST Tory modernisers seem to be undermining their longer-serving MPs yet again.

A *Sunday Telegraph* story, probably planted by cronies of David Cameron, talked of a "Tory grey list" that was "thwarting" the hopes of the party's A-listers who are waiting for a Commons seat. This is a repeat of the "bed-blocking" row which caused immense anger two years ago.

Away from the spin, the Tories' old crusties include some of the best parliamentarians. And Labour has rather a greater "grey" factor than the opposition.

The *Sunday Telegraph* hatchet job ludicrously identified MPs as young as 61-year-old Douglas Hogg and Richard Shepherd, 63. Both these men are among the most consistent attenders of Commons debates. They also tend to ask ministers some of the trickiest questions.

Few would be sorry to see pompous 72-year-old Michael Mates leave the Commons; but Sir Peter Tapsell, 76, was spot-on about the Iraq war and the Treasury's inept sale of gold reserves. Tapsell may be risibly fruity but he is independent minded and knows some history – desirable qualities for an MP, surely.

Peter Viggers, 68, has almost single-handedly kept the issue of military hospitals in the public eye. And are Cameron's young thrusters really sure they want to upset John Gummer, 66, and Ken Clarke, 66, both of whom are helping young David's policy formation?

Labour has a little-noticed pensioner bubble of its own. Ann Cryer, Anne Clwyd, Frank Cook, Gwyneth Dunwoody, Paul Flynn, Ian Gibson, Piara Khabra, Dame Gerald Kaufman, Alan Keen, Glenda Jackson, Austin Mitchell, Eddie O'Hara, John Prescott, Ken Purchase, Geoffrey Robinson, Dennis Skinner, Des Turner, Bob Wareing, David Winnick and the little-seen Father of the House, Alan Williams, were all born before 1940. Khabra is the grand-daddy of them all. He has been carbon-dated to 1924 and is, it must be admitted, embarrassingly useless in the House.

But of those just listed, Clwyd, Dunwoody, Flynn, Gibson, Kaufman, Jackson, Mitchell, Robinson, Skinner, Wareing and particularly Winnick are all, one way or another, interesting parliamentary voices. And who can query the youthful energy of Shagger Prescott? He's friskier than many a 30 year old!

Elsewhere in the Commons, the Rev Ian Paisley was born in 1926. He may not be the physical figure he was but he can still bring the House to a halt with his oratory.

Labour also has a huge number of MPs who were born in the early 1940s. Many of these will doubtless stand again at the next election, which may not be held until 2009. By 2013, therefore, Labour's benches could look like something out of an old people's home. Does that matter? The smooth-chinned marketing youths who think they run modern politics will no doubt say that a modern party needs to look and sound youthful. Others might argue that an older prliament is less likely to allow the executive to abuse power. We had an inexperienced Commons in 1997... and look where it got us.

'Gavel Basher'

SO MUCH for the Tories' attempts to bask in the glow of school dinner champion Jamie Oliver in Bournemouth last week.

In his speech to conference, David Cameron himself asked: "Who has done more to improve school food – Jamie Oliver or the Department for Education?" Shadow Education Secretary David Willets was equally keen to emphasise how "Jamie Oliver has had a massive impact on school dinners".

However, this didn't stop Willets agreeing to be the main attraction at a Bow Group breakfast meeting sponsored by Compass Group... the firm that served up the revolting Turkey Twizzlers that inspired Oliver's campaign in the first place.

THE formerly blue Tories' attempts to paint themselves as green may lead to red faces all round.

Cameron appointed John Gummer and Zac Goldsmith to run a "Quality of Life" working group, which has the advantage of making the Tories appear eco-friendly while not making any concrete policy proposals as the group does not report until next year.

However, when it does report, Cameron will have to accept or reject its recommendations, some of which might be uncomfortable.

He does not have to worry about erstwhile eco-warrior Zac Goldsmith. From his conference performance, it seems Zac has abandoned green militancy entirely, breathlessly telling delegates: "We are seeing changing attitudes in the city, with open letters to the Prime Minister from BP and Shell demanding action on climate change." Once upon a time Goldsmith's *Ecologist* magazine would have derided such corporate posturing as "greenwash", but he is now trying hard to fit into a pale green Conservative consensus.

By contrast veteran Tory John Gummer, a former Environment Secretary, gave a far more ferocious performance, telling delegates there was now no chance of more runways at Heathrow or Stansted and that carbon taxes must be "much tougher" than expected. Will mild Goldsmith or militant Gummer win the day? Watch this space...

WHEN Labour promoted road pricing plans at its recent conference in Manchester, it was keen to sell the scheme as thoroughly green. But it was the road pricing lobbyists who were in the driving seat – and they seemed far more interested in the colour of money.

Transport Minister Stephen Ladyman told a fringe meeting that "we will go to road pricing in the next 10-15 years", billing it as a weapon against global warming. However, he did acknowledge that car charges mean that: "We must have attractive public transport alternatives".

In London, congestion charging has been linked to matching fare structures on buses and Tube, made possible by Transport for London's special powers. However, outside London councils have far less control over the buses, and a report by the main urban Passenger Transport Executives showed how bus firms outside the capital have jacked up prices, chased away customers and congested the roads, undermining any future traffic charge schemes.

Taking on these companies should be central to make road-charging work. But will this happen? Don't bank on it. The meeting at which Ladyman was speaking was sponsored by the bus firm Go Ahead, alongside its chief executive, Keith Ludeman.

Transport Minister Douglas Alexander also spoke about the "politics of road pricing", and also made a green case for the taxes. His meeting was paid for by T-Systems, a subsidiary of Deutsche Telekom, which made its interest plain. Alexander spoke against a banner offering "road user charging the T Systems way".

Lib-Dem's largest door jailed for two years

Western Mail

LOVE-RAT North Wiltshire MP James Gray is not the only Tory to have adopted a "don't mention the party" strategy in his constituency literature (*Eye* 1168).

Mid-Bedfordshire MP Nadine Dorries's recently-issued "annual report" carries no fewer than 29 photographs of the rookie MP in its four A3-sized pages – several of them more than once – plus fascinating accounts of how Nadine is "stepping in to save local jobs", "taking on the government" and "eating a huge bar of chocolate" while watching Newsnight. Well done!

Despite the fact that the point of the pamphlet is to give her constituents a progress report on her first year as an MP, nowhere on it does the word "Conservative" appear, except in a small photograph showing the home page of Nadine's website – and one needs a magnifying glass to spot it. No doubt coincidentally, Nadine eschews traditional Tory blue in the design of the report in favour of the shade of purple adopted by Jane Horrocks's fictional populist, non-political prime minister in BBC1's The Amazing Mrs Pritchard.

It is easy to understand why one might want to keep quiet that one is a Tory MP – it is, after all, a cause of social embarrassment to many. But they are all surely going to have to "come out" some day before the next election. Aren't they?

JOINED-UP GOVERNMENT

September 2006: John Prescott tells the Labour party conference that "The canals of Manchester and many cities were symbols of urban decline... When we came to office we changed the Treasury borrowing rules to allow publicly-owned bodies like British Waterways to be more enterprising, using public private partnerships to unleash their full potential. They have become major engines of urban regeneration. As a result, we transformed derelict canals into flourishing urban centres: profitable assets instead of the decaying liabilities the Tories left behind."

September 2006: British Waterways has its grant from government slashed for the third time this year, resulting in the scaling-back of future restoration projects and the abandonment of a number of canals.

REVOLVING DOORS

AS SPECULATION mounts about Tony Blair's post-ministerial future, a clutch of former ministers have shown how Labour's old leaders can easily be recycled by the private sector. The latest reports from the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments reveal Labour's business-friendly leaders are now happily taking jobs with firms involved in privatisation and government regulation.

● Former **Education Minister Lord Filkin** became a director of **Serco** back in February (though the appointment has only just been announced). Serco has taken over management of schools from local authorities and has extensive interests in Labour's schools and hospitals privatisation programme.

● Former **Health Minister Melanie Johnson** now works as a paid adviser to the drug industry trade body, the **Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry.** She took the job in April having stopped being a minister in May 2005.

● Until 2005 Blairite MP **Denis MacShane** was a **Foreign Office Minister for Europe**. He is still MP for Rotherham, but supplements his MP's salary with an advisory post for privatisation firm **United Utilities** (earning £10,000 to £15,000, according to the register of members' interests). His new employer has been heavily criticised for its big profits, high charges and excessive water leaks.

● **Baroness Symons**, another former **Foreign Office Minister**, became an adviser to **Caparo**, the steel firm run by ennobled, Labour-supporting millionaire Lord Paul. Symons' international contacts make her attractive to trans-national companies (she already works for international legal and lobbying firm **DLA Piper Rudnick** and has a seat on the **British Airways** board.

● Former **Housing Minister Nick Raynsford** is supplementing his MP's salary as a non-executive director of **Hometrack**, the housing valuation firm. Raynsford attacked his ministerial successors for abandoning "Home Information Packs", the proposed mandatory house-selling information documents. Hometrack was involved in the government's "dry run" for these packs. Hometrack also markets its housing valuation services to the government, local authorities and government-funded housing associations.

● Former **Pensions Minister Baroness Hollis** joined pensions consultancy **Higham Dunnet Shaw plc**. The advisory committee on business appointments said she must "not be personally involved in lobbying government ministers or officials" for a year after leaving office in 2005. This period has now passed.

● Four months after losing his Home Office job, former **Home Secretary Charles Clarke** took a new job with law firm Beachcroft this month. According his new employer, Clarke will "work closely with" former **Tory Minister Lord Hunt**, who heads the firm's "regulatory consultancy". The advisory committee restricted Clarke's new job quite tightly by their standards. It said Clarke "should not be personally involved in, or give advice on, any of the firm's business directly relating to government" until May 2007. As almost any regulatory advice relates to the government, it is hard to see how Clarke will be able to work within these restrictions up to next May. Clarke also became a non-executive director of schools equipment firm **LJ Group**, which is seeking work under the government's Building Schools for the Future programme. The committee ruled that Clarke "should not be personally involved in lobbying the government on behalf of the firm for a year after leaving office".

● As the *Eye* has already reported, former **Defence Minister Ivor Caplin** took a job with lobbying firm **Foresight Communications** without properly consulting the advisory committee. The committee also revealed that Caplin took another job advising **MBDA**, a missile firm partly owned by BAE Systems.

'Backbiter'

"The laughing policeman's refusing to laugh on moral grounds"

POLICE FIVE

POLICE newsletters are usually pretty self-congratulatory, but the autumn edition of North Wales Police's *Y Glas* (The Blue) featured half a page dedicated to a poem singing the praises of controversial chief constable Richard Brunstrom.

Y Glas is printed at taxpayers' expense and shoved through every letterbox in North Wales. *Diolch byth am Richard Brunstrom* (Thank heaven for Richard Brunstrom), by the National Poet of Wales, Gwyn Thomas, praises the top officer for encouraging the development of the use of the Welsh language in the force.

"We should be grateful for him / We need more English like him / Richard Brunstrom / And fewer of the sort of Welsh / Who invent impediments / To shut our language in / Some final and eternal bin," says the translated version of the final stanza of the poem, printed in full along with a photograph of Brunstrom in his white robe in the Gorsedd of the Bards at the National Eisteddfod. There's lovely!

Down on the Farm

THERE are still possibly old ladies who leave money in their wills to the RSPCA, under the impression that it is staffed by kindly folk whose main task is to rescue oil-soaked cormorants or tend maltreated puppies. What they haven't grasped is the extent to which the RSPCA has been transformed into something rather different: a political organisation, unhealthily close to government, which spends a large part of its charitable donations to promote political lobbying campaigns of a highly partisan nature.

A perfect cue for such a campaign was last year's call from more than 400 farm vets and veterinary scientists for a cull of the TB-infected badgers which they blame for spreading an epidemic of TB in Britain's cattle herds. In the face of ever more evidence that removing sick badgers can halt the spread of the infection to cattle, Defra finally tried to buy time with a "consultation exercise". This was the cue for the RSPCA to step in last spring, spending thousands of pounds of its charitable funds on full-page ads in national newspapers, showing a large cartoon of a badger as Kitchener with the slogan "We need you".

The text categorically asserted that the cattle were not catching bovine TB from badgers but from each other. Animal lovers were exhorted to join such badger experts as Joanna Lumley, Angela Rippon, Jilly Cooper and ex-Spice Girl Mel C in calling on the government to resist calls for the slaughter of thousands of innocent badgers. Certainly this had an impressive effect. Of 47,472 responses to the Defra consultation, it was estimated that more than 33,000 were triggered off by the RSPCA ads.

The only problem, as genuine experts were quick to point out, was that the ad's allegedly factual claims were untrue. Recent studies had confirmed that infectious badgers are indeed the main source of TB in cattle. Tests lately carried out for the Welsh Assembly on 459 badgers found dead on roads found that those areas where the rate of TB infection is highest, as in Monmouthshire with 28 percent, coincide with TB hotspots in cattle. Furthermore the evidence now shows that a properly conducted cull of sick badgers produces a dramatic fall in cattle TB, as in Donegal where, under the so-called "Irish studies", the drop was an astonishing 96 percent.

So glaringly did the RSPCA's ads bend the truth that two people, Dr Nick Fenwick of the Farmers Union of Wales, and Hilary Seals, a Devon farmer's wife, lodged complaints with the Advertising Standards Authority. The ASA found that the RSPCA had failed to allow for uncertainty surrounding the science of bovine TB, and therefore ruled that the ads were in clear breach of the code, instructing the RSPCA that it must never publish such misleading claims again.

At least the RSPCA can take comfort from the fact that the relevant minister, "Baby Ben" Bradshaw, is still firmly on side. Next to a picture of himself cuddling up next to the RSPCA's director, former Lib Dem MP Jackie Ballard (who got the job after losing her seat for being such a vocal opponent of foxhunting), Ben announced in the *Farmers Guardian* that he proposed to take no notice of the ruling against the RSPCA.

'Muckspreader'

ITV

Trinny and Susannah Undress... (ITV1)

LAST week was a good one for believers in irony and poetic justice when Trinny and Susannah, queens of the TV make-over, were the victims of a disastrous attempt to make over themselves.

The tit-talking duo left their BBC2 vehicle *What Not To Wear* over what seems to have been a combination of much more money from ITV1 and feeling unloved by the corporation bosses. The result is **Trinny and Susannah Undress...**, a new series in which the girls give a double makeover to couples who are having trouble in their relationship.

One of the absolute rules of television is that presenters should be very wary of moving between networks.Broadcasters as varied as Morecambe & Wise, The Goodies, Desmond Lynam, Clive Anderson, Anthea Turner, Dom Joly, Michael Parkinson and Graham Norton have all stuttered – or in some cases virtually disappeared – after switching sides. Only Noel Edmonds and Jonathan Ross have achieved equal success at Channel 4 and BBC1 and, in both cases, experienced years in purgatory in between.

The main reason for this is that, whatever stars and agents like to believe, the TV audience is drawn to formats and brands rather than individual luvvies. Also, public service and commercial programmes in Britain remain very different in structure and assumptions. At a simple practical level, Morecambe & Wise, The Goodies and Desmond Lynam never adjusted their material to the need to keep stopping for the audience to be encouraged to go shopping.

Trinny and Susannah, though, faced a problem even greater than these. Because they did not own their BBC format – and the corporation decided to go on running that show with new hosts – they were legally required to come up with an ITV1 format that in no way resembled their BBC one. As they planned their exciting new venture, they knew that White City lawyers would be watching with extreme interest.

So, at some point in the brainstorming, a bright spark has had the idea of getting T & S out of clothes, as it were. Their new series would not be merely a wardrobe rethink for a woman but a complete lifestyling for a pair of lovers. The 360-degree mirror – a cruel examination tool used on *What Not To Wear* – would be replaced by a gauze screen, behind which the couple would stand naked in silhouette. Indeed, nudity is crucial to the concept: the emphasis would be on helping the subjects to improve what they do with their clothes off. Less advice on socks, more on sex.

The first two programmes, though, showed that, in creating a show that would keep the BBC lawyers happy, Trinny and Susannah have taken themselves and the ITV1 audience well outside their comfort zones.

The first problem is that, probably responding to the need for a higher audience on a mainstream channel, the participants have been cast according to the rules of extremity common on reality TV. On *What Not To Wear*, most of the guinea pigs were women of a kind recognisable from the workplace or the school gates.

However, the first pair on *Trinny and Susannah Undress...* were an unusually small man married to an improbably tall woman, a combination which seemed to have been chosen mainly for comic visual impact. In the second show, one of the couple had been seriously ill, which takes the programme into territory far beyond the presenters' natural turf of visible panty lines and tit uplift.

But the fundamental objection to the series is that Trinny and Susannah are being allowed to operate as marriage guidance counsellors, sexual therapists and pyschologists, areas in which they have no training or expertise. In programme one, for example, there's a lot of yukky stuff behind the silhouette screen about which bits of her man the woman likes to lick. Soon, it becomes apparent that the lady had an affair; they have an angry exchange on screen about whether she was drunk while she did it. After a visit to Ann Summers, the girls scatter fluffy handcuffs and bottles of chocolate dipping sauce around the couple's bedroom in order to encourage them to experiment.

The show serves again to confirm what a role model for broadcasters Sir David Attenborough has been. Not only has he stayed throughout his life with his primary employer, but we sort of know that, had he ever switched channels, he would have stuck to wildlife programmes rather than having a go at *Top Gear* or a cookery show.

Having failed to learn these lessons, Trinny and Susannah are left with a career crisis. Legally unable to make use of the title *What Not To Wear*, they seem unlikely to have to save many lines of their CV for series of *Trinny and Susannah Undress...* But the experience of this new show at least qualifies them for a programme – on some digital channel, if not ITV – about disastrous life choices: *What Not To Do*.

'Remote Controller'

DUMB BRITAIN

Steve Wright's Big Quiz, Radio 2

Wright: Who commanded the Norman invasion of England in 1066?
Contestant: Napoleon.

Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: What is a two-word phrase describing tinned haricots in tomato sauce?
Contestant: Egg mayonnaise.
Robinson: The spiritual leader of Tibet is known by what two-word name?
Contestant: The Rabbi.

BBC Radio Norfolk

Roy Waller: On what day did God create Earth?
Contestant: Was it a Tuesday?

AD NAUSEAM

"NO *FT*, no comment" is one of adland's best-known taglines; and next year it would have been 25 years old. But there will be no celebration because the *FT*'s advertising agency, DDB London, has decided to ditch the iconic strap.

DDB won the £5m *FT* account last September. As is fairly standard practice for new broom agencies, it has chosen to slash and burn. The replacement slogan is to be "We Live in Financial Times". Whether or not such a flabby platitude will last 25 years remains to be seen, but DDB creatives must have noticed the irony of introducing such a tag at the same time as 50 *FT* staff were being made redundant.

For any *FT* staffers wondering why they are being given the boot, at least "We live in financial times" is a more honest rejoinder than "we are forging a unified web-first 21st century editorial department".

THE death of Australian naturalist Steve Irwin at the hands (or barb) of a fish caused headaches for his Australia Zoo in Queensland, which was in the process of running a TV advertising campaign.

In it, Irwin's daughter Bindi described the various attractions on offer, including everything from koalas and wombats to the crocodiles with which Irwin was most closely associated. Most enticing of all, Bindi said, was the fact that "there's a chance that you'll see my dad there too."

Irwin's death rendered this somewhat unlikely, and the ad had to be re-edited. Winning first prize for stating the bleedin' obvious, Irwin's business partner and chum John Stainton said: "You can't promise something you can't deliver, so [the line] had to come out. We would have been in trouble for false advertising."

CHANNEL Five has been trying to drum up interest in its new digital offshoot Five US using what marketeers call a teaser campaign.

One week mysterious, un-branded posters appeared stating only that: "Nothing Good Ever Came Out of America". The next week, the posters were updated to read: "Who Says Nothing Good Ever Came Out of America?" along with the Five US branding and details of the imported TV shows on offer.

After the initial teaser, however, more than 70 complaints were made to the ASA asking whether or not this was anti-Americanism. (No doubt some of these originated from the Channel Five press office, looking to squeeze the last drop from its marketing budget with a free headline.) The ASA usually investigates such objections by attempting to establish the veracity of the claims made in the advert. All of which raises the intriguing prospect of some willing wonk having to decide whether or not anything good has indeed ever come out of America. We will keep you posted...

Warballs

"As shocking as the tragedy of 11 September was, at Dell we have discovered a positive consequence of that terrible day. Our employees reached within themselves and responded with strength, caring and selflessness. The internal employee dynamic aligned itself with the external customer experience, as first thoughts went to colleagues, then quickly extended to customers with urgent needs." – **from *Driving a High-Performance Corporate Culture* (Melcrum Publishing).**

"With the current state of world affairs – the Middle East, climate change, avian flu – it's no surprise designers are feeling the need for protective layers and dark hues." – ***Vogue*.**

What the new BBC idents mean

not spent on programmes.

"I got sent here for suggesting we were doing too many parenting programmes"

MEDIA NEWS

CARDINAL Cormac Murphy O'Connor was moved to righteous rage by the recent *Panorama* accusing the Pope of covering up child abuse by Catholic priests. He has sent a formal complaint to BBC director-general Mark Thompson – himself a Catholic – about the "unwarranted" and "deeply prejudiced" programme.

When he calms down a bit, the cardinal might pause to recall the scriptures' advice about motes and beams. He might also recall the case of a Bishop of Arundel and Brighton who learned in 1985 that one of his priests, Michael Hill, was a dangerous paedophile. Instead of contacting the police, the bishop "forgave" Hill and made him chaplain at Gatwick airport – where he sexually assaulted several more children.

Hill eventually went to jail. But the bishop's career flourished. His name? Cormac Murphy O'Connor.

BREAKING news stories always invite speculation in advance of any hard facts, especially on Sky News when there are juicy pictures to run, but precious little else.

When footage arrived of the school in Pennsylvania where Charles Carl Roberts had killed several Amish girls, Tim Marshall and Jeremy Thompson immediately got to work.

They broke the "news" that the killer was called "Roy". He wasn't. Then Marshall suggested that Roy might be Amish. "There is a certain amount of interbreeding among the Amish", revealed Marshall. "If the killer is Amish, that might explain what is happening". Roberts was not Amish.

AT THE Labour conference junior Transport Minister Tom Harris MP was seen on TV berating *Newsnight* hack David Grossman for having the temerity to offer him a selection of political wristbands.

On the *Newsnight* blog afterwards, a couple of viewers commented on Harris's "embarrassing tantrum" and "arrogant, snarling condescension". But then, amazingly, a comment was posted by Tom Harris MP himself.

"Having watched Tuesday's *Newsnight* on my return from conference, I have to admit I agree with most of the above comments about me. I behaved like a total prat, and have apologised to the reporter in question. I completely over-reacted to the wristband thing, finding myself more short of humour than of cash. Sorry, folks."

Such an admission of pompous-prattery is unprecedented in the annals of New Labour. Might his honesty become contagious?

Seven Brides For Seven Sisters

ITV1

SIMON Schama has been earning a reputation as a bit of a TV diva on his latest BBC series, *Power of Art*. During filming, he constantly complained that there were far too many reconstructions, and not enough shots of him speaking directly to camera.

Then James Runcie (briefly director on the series until he was replaced) made a speech to the assembled crew congratulating them on progress, and attributing their adherence to the schedule to the fact that "we were able to persuade Simon to put his hair dryer away".

Schama was so incensed by this suggestion of campery that, in front of everyone, he chucked a glass of wine over Runcie.

THROUGHOUT the building of the new Wembley Stadium, local residents have had to put up with bad TV reception caused by the works and the size of the building.

All along they have been assured that something would be done to restore full reception once work was finished. Now Wembley has announced its exciting new initiative to "help residents tune in" as part of their commitment to being a good neighbour… a half-price subscription on any Sky package for the first six months.

Given that Sky is currently offering a half price subscription for the first three months anyway, and that residents are pretty much stuck with having to switch to digital to deal with their bad reception, residents are underwhelmed by the offer.

In a press release Michael Cunnin, chief executive of Wembley Stadium, said he was "delighted that Sky responded so positively to my appeal for help". With a captive market of every household within a 1.5 mile radius of the stadium, why wouldn't it?

MODESTY UPDATE

"It's always the same. Every time I present a history programme on TV, a critic – normally a man will – make a comment about my 'plunging neckline'. The fact that I have degrees from Oxford and that I'm discussing a serious subject – the ancient civilisation of the Minoans, for example, or the medieval heroine Eleanor of Aquitaine – doesn't seem to make any difference… I fondly imagined I was striking a blow for brainy TV. But none of these reviewers had the grace to accept that. Instead, they seemed deeply suspicious of a thinking woman who had the cheek to have long hair and size ten jeans. To be brainy and beautiful, it seemed, was simply not allowed… In fact, I have encountered this phenomenon so often that I've decided to give it a name: the Helen Syndrome, named after my heroine, Helen of Troy. The 'face that launched a thousand ships', Helen was reputed to be the most beautiful woman in the ancient world." – Bettany Hughes, Mail on Sunday, *1 October*

FINAL CURTAIN

THE Haymarket Theatre in Basingstoke is one of the shrinking number of proper local repertory theatres, providing a home for both professional and amateur drama. Earlier this year, Arts Council England axed its 2007-8 grant of £262,656, claiming that the theatre was a "failing organisation".

Those involved in the theatre say it isn't failing and hasn't been for a couple of years, since a change in management. The Theatre Trust is currently solvent, audiences have been increasing and they are asking for no increase in funding; but an appeal to the Independent Complaints Reviewer was rejected. Once the Arts Council pulled out, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council decided to pull its funding for the independent theatre as well. If the Haymarket wasn't failing before, it suddenly was now.

The council's bizarre plan for the Haymarket is now to close it down for most of next year, make staff redundant and then reopen it under the management of The Anvil, Basingstoke's live music and comedy venue. Theatre staff say that by the time the theatre reopens, the local professional expertise needed for a producing repertory theatre will have been lost and the amateur groups who use the venue will either find a new home or have to disband. Due to its small size (452 seats), the Haymarket isn't likely to attract many good touring productions, which are the larger Anvil's stock-in-trade. At that point, the theatre really would be failing and at risk of closing down altogether.

So why shut down at all? The council says it's to carry out "any necessary repairs" (so they don't even know if there are any) and to use the already allocated funding for implementing the new management structure and preparing publicity for the reopening. That means spending almost £500,000 on keeping the stage dark for at least nine months. But independent Councillor Ian Tilbury, who opposes the plan, suggests another possibility. Making the 54 staff redundant now avoids having to transfer their employment rights to the Anvil.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

KATE MOSS DESIGNS FOR TOP SHOP
REMEMBER KATE, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT YOUNG GIRLS, WITH HARDLY ANY MONEY, WHO DON'T REALLY KNOW ABOUT CLOTHES!
PHILIP GREEN
…BUT ENOUGH ABOUT MY STAFF….. LETS TALK ABOUT THE CLIENTELE!
TOP SHOP

MEDICINE BALLS

6. Doctors and the Drug Industry

DOES the drug industry still have too much influence over doctors? M.D. was asked to support this motion, with New Labour MP Harold Stoate, at the Oxford Union last month. The debate was paid for by the industry and attended by its employees, so unsurprisingly we lost. But I left £500 richer (plus expenses, meal and overnight accommodation).

Opposing us were two GPs: Peter Fellows and George Rae, current and former chairmen of the BMA prescribing sub-committee. Their (paraphrased) argument was that medicine is now so closely scrutinised and regulated, with prescribing largely dictated by evidence-based formularies, that it's far harder for doctors to wander off message and prescribe bucket loads of an unproven drug because they like the breasts of a cheerleader rep. Besides, doctors are professionals who are trained to absorb any amount of excessive hospitality without it clouding our professional judgement.

Indeed, the days of excessive hospitality are supposed to be over, thanks to the new Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) code which came into effect on 1 January 2006. Freebies given to doctors, otherwise known as promotional aids, should cost no more than £6 (excluding VAT). This should be the street value, so a company can't bulk buy 20,000 rubber nun suits with "Pfizer" tattooed above the buttocks if I can't buy the same item in my local corner shop for £6 or less.

Also, the gift has to be relevant to professional practice. Branded thermos flasks, travel rugs, teapots, dentures, barometers, etc, are out. And the gift has to be matched to the recipient. For example, a rep can't give a receptionist a tongue depressor (even if she's really earned one). Travel expenses can't be paid for local meetings and all flights are economy only (unless you're a speaker). You can't take your wife, lover or children unless there's a good professional reason for it. There are dozens more rules ranging from the size of the lettering on "laminated leave pieces" to the format of the inane adverts placed in medical journals. And unlike medical self-regulation, where very few people shop a colleague, competitors are lining up to report you if you stray from the code.

The downside is that membership of the ABPI isn't compulsory, and given that most doctors haven't got a clue who's in and who's out, suspension seems only to cause a little internal embarrassment. On 10 February 2006, Abbott Laboratories was suspended from the ABPI for "a minimum of six months" after being rumbled taking doctors on various corporate jollies (one to Wimbledon and two to a greyhound racing stadium). However, it was the escort of a doctor to an evening presentation with two leading edge female presenters (ie a lap dancing bar) that raised the most eyebrows.

Abbott doesn't seem to have suffered commercially for its slapped wrist and indeed it was reinstated to the ABPI on 1 July, less than five months into its minimum six-month suspension. Overall, the drug industry in the UK spends £1.65bn marketing its drugs, whereas the Department of Health spends just £4.5m a year providing independent prescribing information to doctors (or at least it did until it axed its subscription to the excellent Drugs and Therapeutics bulletin). Drug companies pay for or subsidize just about every educational meeting doctors attend. They wouldn't do it without some return.

One solution would be for doctors to pay for their own education, or at least for the industry to pool its educational grants so no individual company has undue influence over training. But all this is pointless if we can't trust the "evidence" on which our training is based. The drug industry is certainly clearing up its front of house operations, but companies still control the research and information flow about their own products, and use medical journals as an extension of their marketing arm. If all companies were obliged to pool their clinical research funding, so all large scale trials could be performed and published independent of the manufacturer, we'd all be a lot safer.

M.D.

NHS Number crunching

£340m ■ Cost of clinical consultants in 2005/06

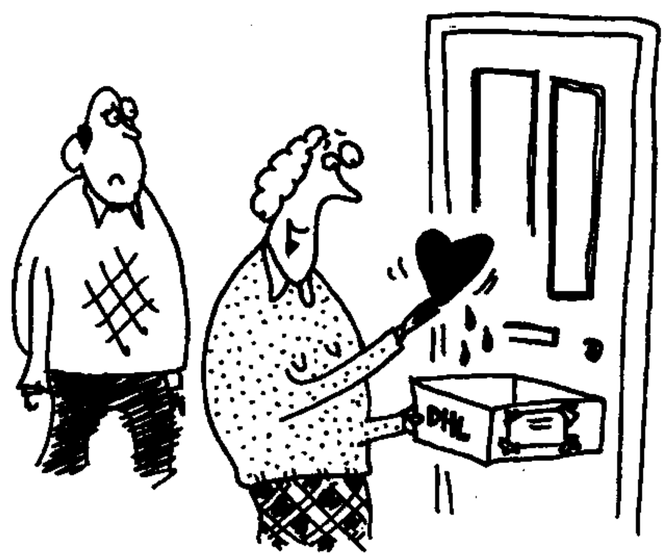
£325m ■ Cost of management consultants in 2005/06

Number crunching

£280,000

■ Salary of Richard Granger, NHS director of IT responsible for computer fiasco

■ Salary of 13½ junior doctors



"Darling, did you order a live heart?"

AIR RAGE

NEW Environment Secretary David Miliband professes to be "scared" by global warming. But he's not scared enough to introduce policies that curb the growth in flights, or even to suggest that people should think twice about frequent flying.

Interviewed on the BBC's *Today* programme during the Labour conference, he said: "I think we've got to tell them that if they're going to fly more, they've got to do less of something else that emits carbon dioxide. Let's put this in perspective. At the moment air flights are some of the most noxious and dangerous fumes (sic) but they are about 2 percent of the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, 3 percent of the carbon dioxide equivalent.

"However, it's one of the fastest rising causes of global warming. In that context what we've said is, if we're going to fly more we're going to have to do less of something else... The key is to get aviation into the European emissions trading system so that if there is more flying, there's less of something else."

Evidently appeasing the air lobby overrides policy on global warming. If people fly more on short-haul journeys, something they'll do less is travel by surface transport. The government's own figures show that planes from London to Manchester and Edinburgh emit more than eight times as much carbon dioxide per passenger as electric trains, and more than 10 times as much as coaches. Even cars emit significantly less than planes per passenger mile.

'Fokker'

SIGNAL FAILURES

Standing joke

OCCASIONALLY South West Trains guards are thoughtful enough to announce to passengers that their train has stopped for several minutes because it's running early, and not because something's wrong.

Actually something *is* wrong. SWT, owned by Stagecoach, changed its timetables in December 2004. Updating timetables to reflect changes in travel habits is sensible, but at the same time SWT decided that replicating the performance of British Rail would be too difficult. Instead, it padded schedules with extra minutes and the official statistics duly improved (although SWT is only marginally better than Southern and South Eastern Trains, which haven't padded their timetables and have more complex tracks).

The result for SWT passengers is slower journeys with tedious waiting en route. Often the doors shut before advertised departure time and trains sometimes depart early, leaving behind passengers who turned up on time.

Passengers though are incidental to a production-led outfit like SWT, whose task is to move trains around the network, meet performance targets and collect fares and subsidy. But even in that context SWT's surplus padding is questionable, as a train standing for several minutes for the clock to catch up blocks the track for other trains. Rail managers have strived over the last couple of decades to exploit Britain's limited tracks to the full, but SWT has managed to reduce the railway's effective capacity in a period of growing demand.

So it's just as well Stagecoach announced last month that, under the terms of its new SWT franchise, it would provide 20 percent more seats on its peak London suburban trains. That pledge allayed the disappointment Stagecoach caused previously by telling SWT passengers it had ordered 785 new trains, when in fact it had ordered 785 carriages (*Eye* 1051).

Whoops! Last week SWT said the promise of extra seats was a mistake. Instead it will *remove* seats, to create more standing room so that more passengers can be crammed in! In the world's fourth richest economy, seats on commuter trains are wasted space.

"NEW" Labour is itching to close more rail stations, so was Islington North Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn taking the piss when he asked which railway lines outside Scotland were being considered for reopening?

Derek Twigg, then Transport Minister, replied: "In July next year we will publish our high-level output specification. This will set out the railway outputs the government wish to buy in terms of capacity, safety and reliability and the funding to support this for the next five years. It is for the industry to determine what inputs are needed to deliver this."

Why use one word to say "none" when 56 will do?

PS: Answering a Freedom of Information request about First Great Western's last fares rise, a Transport Department "contract manager" wrote: "There has been some change to the interaction of railcards and FGW new advance purchase FirstMinuteFares." In English that means: "FGW has scrapped railcard discounts on its cheapest fares."

'Dr B Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

SLEAZY DOES IT

SENIOR Westminster Conservative councillor Robert Davis, *Eye* 1167 reported, is the subject of a complaint to the Standards Board of England regarding an alleged conflict of interest.

As a solicitor with West End firm Freeman Box, representing a Soho Chinese restaurant called the Crispy Duck, he wrote to council officers dealing with his client's application for a 50-seat extension, inquiring whether the local residents association, the Soho Society, would drop its objection.

Cllr Davis is a highly influential figure on the council: he is the Tory group's chief whip, cabinet member for planning, chairman of the general purposes committee and he sits on the important appointments and standards committees. Furthermore his boyfriend, Sir Simon Milton, is leader of the council. When the Soho Society refused to withdraw its objections to the Crispy Duck application, Sir Simon told committee member Glen Suarez that "Robert is very upset with you". No wonder Suarez said he felt "intimidated".

But Robert Davis has been confusing his professional and council roles for many years now. More than a decade ago he was attempting to influence council officers and fellow councillors in favour of another of his clients, the No 12 Club, a sleazy "hostess bar" in Denman Street, Soho, which wanted to extend its licence into the early hours of the morning. He wrote letters to the chairman of the licensing sub-committee and to the director of planning on Freeman Box headed paper. It certainly had an effect – the *Eye* has seen a note from the No 12 Club's licensing application file, hand-written by the then director of licensing, David Chambers, to officers handling the case. "I would prefer to go 'softly, softly' on this one," it said. When the application was heard on 29 September 1994, it was never made clear to members that the club was represented by Cllr Davis. At a subsequent full meeting of the council, Davis declared that he had no connection with the application. But then Cllr Davis is a very busy man. He surely cannot be expected to remember every licensing application for every sleazy bar that crosses his desk!

● **GOOD to see that South Gloucestershire council is taking the new Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, which came into force on 1 October, seriously. Staff have received a memo warning them of the PC pitfalls of being insufficiently respectful to crumblier colleagues – sorry, seniors. The memo, from personnel manager Peter Scrivener, warns that even a jokey birthday card suggesting someone's age puts them "over the hill" could be actionable. Alas the memo then blithely, ahem, kicks the stick away from its own advice by signing off: "From hip-hop to hip op, South Gloucestershire council is an age diverse organisation."**

BEYOND THE LAW

IT IS just two years since Doncaster mayor Martin Winter hired Susan Law, former chief executive of Adelaide city council, at vast expense to be Donny's new "managing director". At the time he proclaimed the appointment a major coup for the embattled authority.

Alas, after running her ruler over the council's parlous finances, one of Law's first acts was to freeze all budgets. But the atmosphere between mayor and MD only really turned sour last Christmas, when Law was obliged to call in Inspector Knacker to investigate allegations of corruption surrounding the mayor's pet Glass Park project (*Eyes passim*) following a damning district auditor's report into how the scheme to regenerate a derelict glass factory site had swallowed some £2m over seven years with very little result.

The crown prosecution service eventually concluded that there was insufficient evidence to charge anyone in connection with the fiasco. Law also commissioned a wide-ranging – and still ongoing – inquiry into the project by Stuart Dobson, former chief exec of Birmingham city council. This was the last straw for Winter. With Law back in Australia for most of last month following a family bereavement, he launched a Thai-style coup. The ruling Labour cabinet met behind closed doors to consider "concerns" about Law's "performance" including allegations of poor communication skills, an "overbearing" attitude towards fellow officers and a lack of consultation with the mayor and cabinet. A disciplinary procedure, with the aim of removing the MD, is now under way.

Ms Law can expect a massive payoff as the price of her departure. But, hey, it's only the taxpayers' money.

ALL WIGHT FOR SUM

STAFF at Isle of Wight council are reeling at news that the district auditor has refused to approve last year's accounts.

The problem is almost £1m paid to County Hall mandarins whose faces no longer fitted, including former chief exec Mike Fisher, predecessor to Joe "Vera" Duckworth, fire chief Richard Hards and education boss David Pettitt, who sailed away with £170,000, £140,000 and £110,000 respectively. Bungs to six lesser mortals brought the total to £870,000 in a year.

The district auditor is continuing to probe by whom, how and why these massive payments were made, and why much of the dosh came out of the council's pension fund.

CHARITY NEWS

HOW much does it cost to play? For 1,800 disabled children, as of September it costs £37.50 a week after a charity decided it was too cash-strapped to let them into its playgrounds for free any more.

Charity Kids runs eight playgrounds in London, designed to offer play facilities to both disabled and able-bodied children at the same time, with staff on hand to supervise and help children with special needs.

The charity wrote to parents in August telling them that from September there would be a charge of £7.50 a day to use the playgrounds or £3.50 for the after-school sessions. A feasibility study carried out by staff, parents and carers at the Charlie Chaplin playground in Oval found that just one in ten parents who currently use the playground thought that they would be able to afford regular evening sessions and none could afford the full daily rate. Most of the playgrounds are in poorer areas.

Kids, formed a few years ago by a merger between the playgrounds charity and a children's respite care charity, says that the playgrounds are making a loss and that "every effort has been made to increase income, attract additional funding and to reduce costs at the playgrounds".

Staff and parents, however, believe that the funding has been hopelessly mismanaged. Most of Kids' income comes from social services grants from the local authorities where it works, but Pizza Express staff raised £42,000 for Kids playgrounds and the charity has several big name patrons including Cherie Blair and David Cameron. Last year's accounts show that Kids spent £666,000 on "fundraising, events and publicity" – that's nearly half of the £1.4m actually raised from fundraising and donations – surely it could do better than that!

Astonishingly the charging starts just as the playgrounds had the chance of substantial funds from the Big Lottery. As a rare provider of inclusive playgrounds where disabled children can play with non-disabled siblings and friends, they would be well placed to apply for November's funding round for the Children's Play Initiative. But to do so, they would have to demonstrate "strategic and sustainable provision for play as a *free* public service to children".

FE NEWS

STAFF at Britain's newest university, Edge Hill in Lancashire, worked hard for their institution's promotion from higher education college status – and have been rewarded with a huge kick in the teeth.

In August Edge Hill management suddenly opted out of a national negotiation over job evaluation and balloted staff over an alternative local version that scraps this year's salary increment and cuts the maximum pay academic staff can reach due to long service by £9,000. The vast majority of academics were, of course, away on leave at the time of the vote, since it was right in the middle of the summer holidays.

Thus Edge Hill's first term as a university began with a shiny new logo from Splinter Design (or "fresh innovative rebranding" as they call it), a vote of no-confidence by staff in the director of human resources, a vote of censure against vice-chancellor Dr John Cater and a possible legal challenge from the University and College Union. Welcome to university life!

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

AT LEAST SOMETHING GOOD HAS COME FROM THE DREADFUL THEFT YOU WERE VICTIM TO, QUIN... AND IN THIS VERY COFFEE SHOP...
APPARENTLY THERE'S BEEN A SPATE OF SIMILAR CRIMES HERE AND RODOLPHE WAS ALL FOR OUR POSTER IDEA
IF WE CAN SAVE JUST ONE LAPTOP...
Rodolphe's
Maison du Café
WARNING MANBAG THIEVES ARE OPERATING IN THIS AREA

NOOKS and CORNERS

A BIG spanner has been thrown in the works of the notorious Pathfinder regeneration initiative, the government policy of mass demolition of perfectly sound old terraced houses, mostly in the north of England (*Eyes passim*).

John Prescott, when running the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, put his considerable weight behind this scheme, but the spanner has been lobbed in by a courageous disabled grandmother, Elizabeth Pascoe, who lives in the Edge Lane area of Liverpool, which is threatened with clearance and redevelopment.

Under the Pathfinder initiatives, home owners who decline the pittance offered in compensation for the seizure of their homes are served a compulsory purchase order (CPO). Mrs Pascoe challenged her CPO as an infringement of her human rights. Two weeks ago, in the high court in London Judge Forbes agreed with her and ruled that English Partnerships had acted unlawfully by attempting to acquire 367 homes in the Edge Lane Area by CPO. Hooray!

This decision has disconcerted the Liverpool Land Development Company, the agency working with Liverpool City Council to encourage development, as well as the Rt Hon Ruth Kelly, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, who succeeded Prescott in promoting Pathfinder schemes. Only a "technical" breach of the law has been committed, they insist. Whether this will stop their implementation or whether the government will come up with new Draconian powers to ensure the demolition of swathes of serviceable housing remains to be seen. "This is a pyrrhic victory for me," Mrs Pascoe admitted. "It is bittersweet because much of my community has already been destroyed as a result of this initiative." And it has been destroyed, by a Labour government, entirely to encourage profitable new housebuilding – even though refurbishing existing houses is cheaper and more environmentally friendly.

The ruthless and destructive Pathfinder initiative represents a return to the comprehensive redevelopment culture of the 1960s, when the interests of individuals were of no consequence compared with those of the big industrialized system-builders who were so closely involved with local politicians.

In the case of Edge Lane, it has been alleged that criminal families have been moved in to the area to encourage others to leave. What is certain is that Mrs Pascoe has suffered physical intimidation, while another campaigner against Pathfinder received death threats, had his car fire-bombed and was eventually driven out of the area.

Yet Labour stands firm. Jane Kennedy, the local MP who, at the public inquiry, described the proposals as "social cleansing", lost her job as the government's health minister earlier this year.

Another casualty is Ken Walker, former leader of Middlesborough Council, who has been expelled from Labour for opposing the Pathfinder demolitions in the Gresham area of the city which he represents as councillor (*Eye* 1162). The first phase of the proposal to destroy 1,500 terraced houses has just been approved by the council, although Cllr Walker pointed out that the £8.79m allotted would provide on average only £36,000 for acquiring each property when the council itself estimates that £53,000 is needed for the purchase price plus (derisory) compensation.

Another official euphemism for the Pathfinder schemes is "Housing Market Renewal", that is, pushing up land values for the benefit of developers, builders and councils, not for residents. Yet the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has reported that the renewal schemes have caused blight which has reduced the value of threatened homes by an average of £35,000. In other words, Pathfinder is essentially thuggery and theft as well as an architectural and environmental crime. We must pray that Mrs Pascoe's victory will put a stop to it.

MY photograph shows the entrance foyer of the Shell Tower on the South Bank, which Shell International wants to destroy in favour of a bigger foyer resembling a 1980s American bank to be designed by HOK Architects (Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, Inc.: "a global provider of design and project delivery services").

Designed by Sir Howard Robertson and Ralph Maynard Smith and built in 1956-63, the Shell Centre was controversial as it was monumental and stone-faced and thus not properly "Modern" (so much the better, perhaps, and it has weathered well). Today the complex is unlisted, yet originally it was furnished with imaginatively designed interiors and art works by a team of distinguished artists and designers. Much has gone or has disappeared, like the mural by Osbert Lancaster in the theatre foyer, but the main entrance foyer and inner hall, although altered, remain largely intact.

Lined with superb marbles and subtly decorated with shells, it was the work of Ernesto Rogers, partner in the famous Italian modernist firm of BBPR and the uncle of the less interesting and less talented modern superstar, Milord Rogers of Riverside.

An interior by Ernesto Rogers ought today to be cherished and celebrated, not casually destroyed for the sake of a pathetic modern image for the giant overweening oil conglomerate.

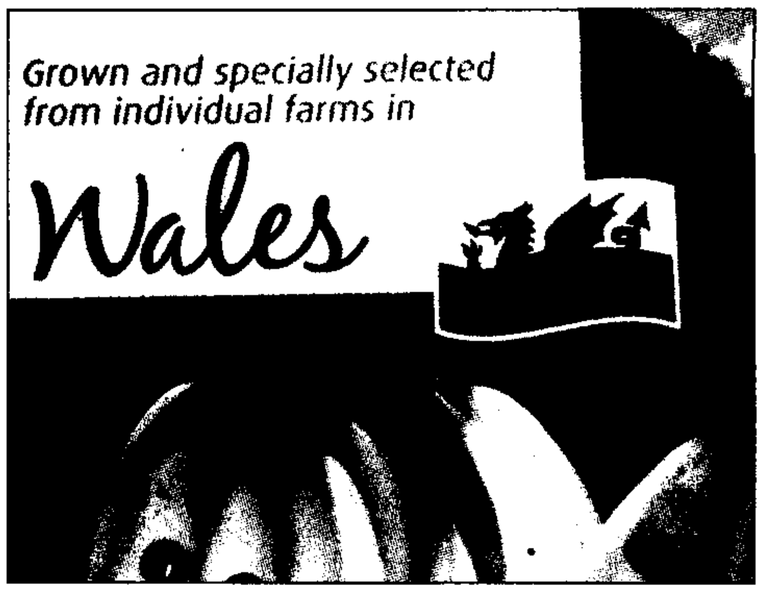
'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

There's a working Reality TV office, abstract paintings which all measure exactly 48 cm x 38 cm, grotesque clay sculptures of lumpy women, and a mad scientist's meaningless installations.
TURNER PRIZE 2006 EXHIBITION
Something for everyone!

I-SPY *Waitrose, Monmouth*



Submitted by Peter Baker. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs.)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

NO FLATTERY no cheque has been the rule for artists and their sponsors since the days of the Medici: to fall at the feet of those who bankroll you is an abiding fact of life.

Sometimes, however, the foot-falling goes to unpalatable extremes. And there's a particularly nasty example coming up at the Barbican next month when the London Symphony Orchestra will stage a concert "in celebration [so says the publicity] of the 90th birthday of Sir Jack Lyons".

To begin with, there is no such person as *Sir* Jack Lyons, as the LSO knows perfectly well but chooses to overlook. The object of the homage is in fact a *Mr* Jack Lyons, mega-rich financier, who was stripped of his knighthood some years ago after exposure as a crook.

His downfall, as you may recall, was the Guinness scandal in which he was found guilty of theft and false accounting and would certainly have gone to prison (as his co-defendants Ernest Saunders and Gerald Ronson did) but for the fact that he claimed to be suffering from cancer, respiratory complaints, a faltering heart and high blood pressure – the combined effects of which reduced his sentence to a £3m fine, with costs.

That after such a comprehensive catalogue of ills Lyons is still with us for his 90th year is, no doubt, something to celebrate. But as you may also remember, his co-crooks made comparably miraculous recoveries, socially and medically. Ernest Saunders got his sentence reduced on the grounds that he had Alzheimer's and couldn't name the US President – only to bounce back into business, acting as a consultant to Carphone Warehouse and advising the now bankrupt would-be publishing tycoon David Elias, for whom the name of the US President was clearly of no consequence. Meanwhile Ronson, within six months of discharge from prison, was socialising with the Queen Mother at the Royal Opera House. Such is punishment for the well-connected.

Most outrageous of all, though, is the way Lyons has persistently refused to accept his punishment and encouraged, through that ever-ready and capacious cheque-book, the idea that he remains a knight of the realm. Despite the failure of a high court appeal, he is persistently addressed as *Sir* Jack not only by the LSO (which takes his money) but by the Royal Academy of Music (where you'll find a *Sir* Jack Lyons Building) and by York University (home of the *Sir* Jack Lyons Concert Hall). And there was a fair amount of *Sir* Jack-ing going on a couple of months ago when Lyons' 90th birthday was marked with a quite separate concert in York Minster.

Gratitude is one thing, fabrication another. One can only assume that no one at the LSO saw the dreadful irony in celebrating Lyons' 90th with a programme that includes Mahler's 9th – described in the concert bumf as "a farewell to life" with "room for grim humour and the garishly grotesque".

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Yours eternally?

Sir,

I was impressed by the Vicar's words at this year's Synod in Manchester, that "I'm always with you... In the years to come, wherever I am, whatever I do, I'm with you."

Loyal members of the congregation will be struck by the parallel with the words of another leader, recorded in Matthew 28 v 20, that "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The humility of the Vicar shines through.

Yours,
DAVID COOK,

Brampton, Cumbria.

Lookalike

Garbage Can Man

Blair

Sir,

I enclose a photo I took in a large store in Kentucky. I know our dear leader is looking for a new day job, but I am sure he can do better than this.

TOM McGEADY,

Drumnadrochit.

NHS for sale

Sir,

Rev Blair insists that the NHS is in safe hands... however, I was using Google to find the name of a hospital in Essex, and was directed to eBay, where I was invited to purchase one. A bit extreme I think, but very "New Labour".

Hospitals in Essex
Find Hospitals in Essex!
Buy Hospitals in Essex on eBay
www.ebay.co.uk

Yours,
DARYL BAMONTE,

London W4.

Hammond organ

Sir,

Even by your standards, the cartoon on page 3 showing a couple watching Top Gear test driving a hearse has reached a new level of tastelessness.

Keep up the good work, I laughed like a drain!

STEVE WILSON,

Via email.

Offensive weapons

Sir,

Following letters from Emily Lane (Eye 1166) and C. Collins (Eye 1168), please note that your cartoons in Eye 1168 offend me as follows. Page 10 – Government Health Warnings about sugar are serious and people will die without such advice – hardly a matter for jokes; p9 – the issue of school dinners is a serious one as excess fat and preservatives will probably kill our children; p18 – my father died this year and he really liked watching the telly; and on page 24, Tony Husband's cartoon is making light of that terrible illness, alcoholism, which kills so many every day. Don't even get me started on the model falling down the drain. Anorexia kills, you know.

Regards,
CHARLIE WANDER,

Via email.

Saint George

Sir,

I confess to being a little bemused as to the regularity – given all the many other tempting targets – with which I am now attacked in the magazine. Having been associated with Private Eye for more than 20 years, I have followed the policy that complaining about the frequent misrepresentations would bring me no good. This week, however, must be different.

For a start, I have never called on the Home Secretary to prosecute Abu Izzadeen; thus the quotation attributed to me in the first item of the magazine this week where I apparently urge John Reid that Izzadeen should be "rigorously prosecuted" is wholly fictitious. It is also damaging to me politically and I must ask that you correct it. The rest of the piece is deranged. That I was locked in a room with bearded fundamentalists during the general election in 2005 is attested to by all the others who were locked in with me, including the young man who made the video your piece claims shows nothing of the kind.

The "brief fight" between two rival Islamist groups the piece describes, er, isn't quite right. The police arrived seconds ahead of a substantial number of my supporters, who helped police apprehend one of Izzadeen's group found to be in possession of a very offensive weapon. Incidentally, the police did not "acquire a video tape of the event"; I gave it to them.

You may wonder why the real point of my letter to Reid after the events in Leyton is absent from this week's piece. That point is that Izzadeen is one of the best-known Islamist extremists in Britain. There is therefore a major question over how he was able to get so close to Reid: either the security agencies did not recognise him (cock-up) or he was allowed to get near the Home Secretary (conspiracy). I am certainly left wondering. It is, in fact, the kind of point I would expect to find in Private Eye.

Yours,
GEORGE GALLOWAY, MP,

House of Commons, SW1.

Deepcut dilemma

Sir,

*As a former member of the army I greeted your article on Deepcut with a resigned "B******s". After all, no fuss was made over the two cadets who shot themselves during my time at Sandhurst and also, do not a significant number of university students commit suicide every year, potentially for the same reason as young soldiers, namely being away from home for the first time in their lives?*

And then I read on. What an appalling situation the wretched commanding officers of that unit found themselves in: The proportion of staff to trainee was/is a disgrace and contrasts sharply with 1 staff to 10 trainees which used to be the case. Mix young men and women without supervision, add alcohol and undoubtedly drugs and then have them armed with loaded weapons flies in the face of any form of common sense or logic. The wonder is things weren't worse.

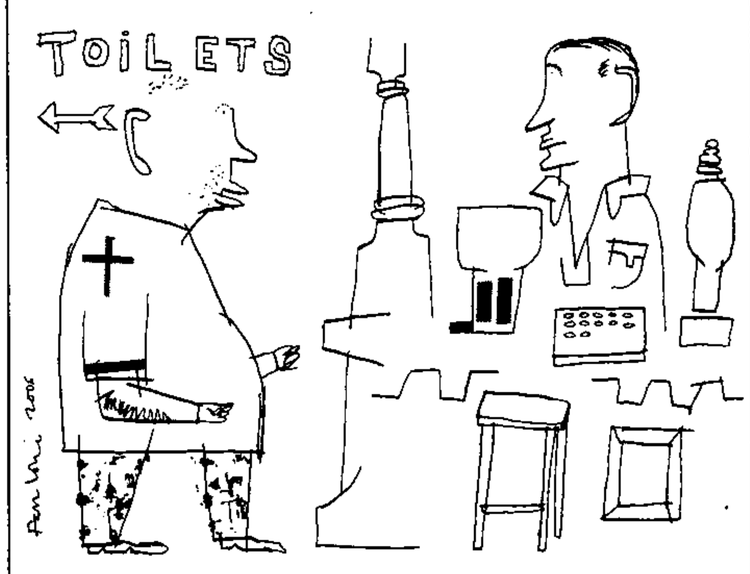
If the attempts by the various COs to obtain more staff failed it can only be because they were not available. The army, unlike the other two services, spends its money largely on manpower but has had to endure cut after cut. Had supervisory staff been available, then it is possible these tragic deaths might not have occurred. The blame, I suggest, lies at the door of politicians whose cheese-paring activities have steadily eroded the strength of the army.

Spending billions on education and health is commendable but the first responsibility of government is the defence of the state. The government should stop saying what a wonderful army we have and spend some money on it.

Yours etc,
JOHN RUSSELL,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See



"Have you got a clean towel and some soap? I want to wash my hands"

LUVVIES

Do you exercise your soul, then?

I was brought up Catholic, but that really turned me away from the Church. I do have a great relationship with God, though. He helped me when I had a drinking problem. He helped me through my divorce. He helped me through big decisions about the *Knight Rider* TV series.

DAVID HASSELHOFF
The Times

Submitted by Henry Carroll.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Simple test

Sir,

I was intrigued to notice that Audit Commission boss Steve Bundred appears to have all too readily accepted Dame Shirley Porter's pleas of poverty (Rotten Boroughs, Eye 1168). Mr Bundred is the brains behind the tough-talking "harder test" Performance Assessment given to all local authorities. However, he seems to have failed a rather simple test (Is Dame Porter broke or not?) on this occasion.

COLLETTE DEAN,

London SW2.

SOLUTIONS

"Allsigns: The Complete Design Solution" – *signs*

"FPS Matting: Total Matting Solutions" – *mats*

"Cedar House Smoking Ban Solutions" – *ashtrays*

"Accent: suppliers of Pay & Display and Pay on Foot Solutions" – *parking meters*

"WBB minerals: working together with mineral solutions" – *gravel*

"Seamfree hi leg F&F knicker solutions" – knickers

All submitted by readers

Democrats R Us

Sir,

In Eye 1168, page 7, TUC Special, 6th paragraph: "What trade union members are to make of their leaders passing on their subs to a party that is..." Oh dear no!

I refer you to the Taff Vale dispute just about 100 years ago following which Trade Unions were required to establish a Political Fund separate from the main subscriptions accounts, and to the toing and froing over the years as successive governments enacted that TU members should positively either opt out of the extra PF payment, or opt in to it. This culminated in the Thatcher government's draconian efforts to cost the Trade Unions as much as it possibly could, by not only ordering an opt-in, but also a regular, five-year, universal ballot (estimated cost £1m a time) on whether or not even to run such a fund, with voting offered not only to the existing payers but also to the opt-outers, and the extra requirement of a 50 percent positive vote each time. That is, for the fund to continue, 50 percent of ***those entitled to vote*** *were required to cast their votes in favour, not simply 50 percent of those actually voting. Don't anyone, ever, accuse the Trade Unions of being undemocratic.*

The "Subs" to which you refer come strictly from the political fund designed for the purpose. The destination of the money is determined by Union policy and that policy is determined democratically by the members. In virtually all practical situations, the cash can really only be used to fund a political party. That it might go to any party other than the Labour Party – for all its many faults – would be unthinkable.

Yours still loyally subscribing,
BRYN GLOVER,

Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Warm Bath

Sir,

Piloti is spot on with his comments on the "foundry" or Newark Works in Bath (Eye 1168). Except for two things – both of which make the situation even worse.

1) The buildings are NOT derelict! Each is filled with a business and scores of people work on site, including me. Everybody will be out by Christmas.

2) The original cobble stones and rail lines of the INTERNAL roadway complement an almost unique industrial scene in Bath.

That site is the last remaining Central Bath riverside brownfield plot to be up for grabs. School? Are you serious? I do not believe the site will become a school. Somehow, the Dyson scheme will develop problems. Unforeseen problems. A bit like the Spa.

NEIL GRAHAM,

Via email.

Cold Bath

Sir,

Your correspondent in Bath must be a sad old bastard.

Week after week he could not conceal his glee at the delays to our magnificent new Spa. Perhaps he was away when the Spa opened because he has failed to report what a fantastic success it is.

The August tourist numbers in Bath hit an all-time high and every Spa user I have asked sings its praises. Such is the excitement in the city that local residents and businesses have clubbed together to pay for a huge firework display (at no cost to ratepayers) on 20 October to celebrate the Spa's success.

Was it the same sad old bastard who provided the Nooks & Corners piece in your last edition? Bath residents place a high value on their architectural heritage but there is a small and vociferous minority who want to turn Bath into a museum by keeping ***everything*** *more than 100 years old.*

The truth is that the two buildings he mentioned are of relatively little architectural merit. They stand in the way of exciting new developments, one of which will replace Southgate, the awful 1960s' shopping area and bus station, with much more attractive and useful facilities.

Yours sincerely,
T. COLLINS,

Bath.

Vocal yokel

Sir,

Taxpayers must cough up full compensation for livestock diagnosed with BSE, foot and mouth, bovine TB and avian flu so farmers won't be forced to commit the criminal offence of concealing notifiable disease?

Are you townie tosspots prepared to swallow any muck Muckspreader pitches at you? Isn't farming supposed to be a business? Doesn't every other self-employed businessman have to insure his stock? Aren't the premiums tax-deductible?

Farmers enjoy countless subsidies, from exemption to IHT, council tax and fuel duty to evading liability for damage to roads and verges. They can claim benefits (sorry, tax credits) even if they are capital millionaires because their capital is treated as if it doesn't exist (letter continues in similar vein)...

M. SWEEPER,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

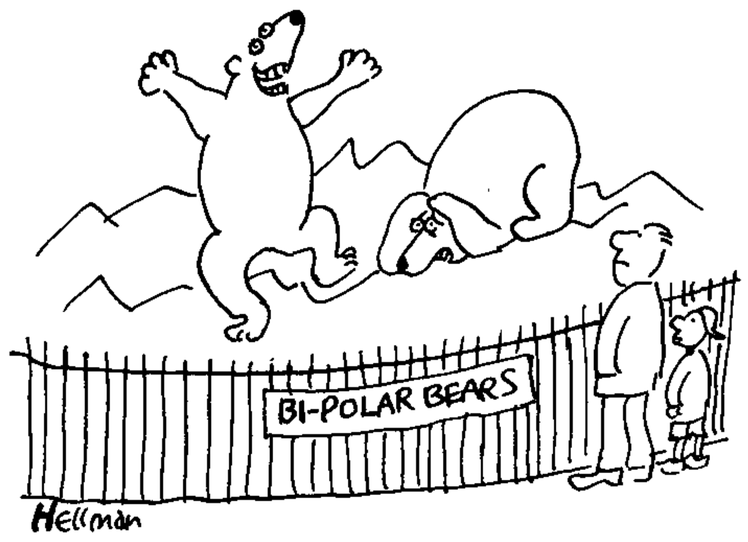
"If there's a better goal scored this season, I've yet to see it."
LEE DIXON, BBC1
(Andrew Nickolds)

"Glen Roeder, his arms folded on the bench behind him..."
Commentator, Radio 5 Live
(Jez)

"The rain is now coming down vertically, straight into Paul Casey's face."
Commentator, Radio 5 Live
(David Zoltowski)

"Reading just had a great five-man move that involved everyone..."
PHIL THOMPSON, bbc.co.uk/sport
(James Robinson)

"Jon Cruddas has joined the ever-increasing set of horses who are throwing in their hats for the race to become deputy leader of the Labour Party."
JAMES LANDALE, BBC News 24
(A Cheffie)



Notes & Queries

Sir,

Could I point out to Knife & Packer, and every other cartoonist on the face of the planet, that live lobsters are a fetching shade of midnight blue and only go red when they are cooked.

Yours faithfully,
FRED MATHISEN,

Aberdour.

Sir,

Can I be the geeks' geek and point out to John Greenwood (Eye 1168) that bandwidth can be measured in any way one chooses, be it kilobits per second, kilobytes per minute or yottabytes per millennium. Admittedly, the kilobit is a fitting measure for low-bandwidth applications like DAB but Radio 3's bottom-end 160kbits/sec bandwidth could also be written as 19.53kbytes/sec. I tried to work it out in yottabytes per millennium as well but I ran out of fingers.

(By the way, now you'll get people writing in to say that a kilobit is in fact 1,024 bits, not to mention my use of "kbits/sec" and "kbytes/sec" in preference to the apparently-clearer "kbps" and "kBps" suffixes. Sad bastards.)

HARRY SABBERS,

Via email.

Sir,

I have been a subscriber for many years now and thought I would never ever been uncool enough to qualify for "pedants' corner" – until now!

In issue 1168 you state that VW Camper Vans like the ones you can win from Dirty Des are no longer "new" as "production ceased some years back and new ones are unavailable".

Sadly, you are incorrect as the original VW T2 models are still being built in Brazil (albeit with a different engine) and are available for purchase from companies such as Beetles-UK.

I'll get my coat now...

DAVE HULME,

Editor www.vwmagazine.co.uk.

Sir,

E.J. Thribb, in alluding to the Col Bogey March on the passing of Malcolm Arnold, should surely know that Malcolm Arnold only adapted Kenneth Alford's composition in his score for the film Bridge Over The River Kwai. A more appropriate reference would have been the suite of English Dances, one of which for many years was the theme to What The Papers Say, presented often by the Eye's very own and much-missed Paul Foot.

Regards,
KEN MACINTYRE,

Via email.

Sir,

Sergio Ung's Colemanballs entry is incorrect: Tony Gubba actually said that Mark Hughes, the Blackburn manager, had pulled his trousers up as if to say "job done", not Jose Mourinho. He was right to do so: they'd just won 4-2 against Man City. I fail to see where the Colemanball lies in this case.

Regards,
EDWARD GILCHRIST,

Bath.

Letter from **Dhaka**

from Our Own Correspondent

FEAR has replaced the envy with which our politicians usually regard our thrusting neighbours across the border in Thailand. Here in Bangladesh, later this month a caretaker government is due to take over ahead of elections early next year. Already it is set to be every bit as unpopular as the late, unlamented regime of Thaksin Shinawatra in Bangkok.

Large crowds have been assembling in our capital, Dhaka, and other towns each week for a hartal, a general strike-cum protest rally to demand less corruption (we make Nigeria look a model of transparency) better wages and working conditions (our average monthly wage is less than US$20) and an end to the daily power blackouts.

A major focus of irritation is, as in Thailand, the composition of our Electoral Commission (EC), which is supposed to guarantee the integrity of the January election and keep an eye on the caretaker government. The EC does have its supporters – but they are pretty much all from the ruling Bangladesh National Party, which supplied the cronies who fill most of the commission's key posts!

The mood is becoming increasingly charged. The opposition Awami League took the hartal to the prime minister's office in Dhaka, prompting policemen and women to wade in with their lathis: whippy, four-foot long sticks more usually reserved for wayward rickshaw drivers, beggars or pedestrians who misbehave at traffic lights.

To try to keep things calm, the government banned all gatherings and rallies within shouting distance of the PM's office. Last month, several thousand troops from the Bangladesh Rifles and the black-clad Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) were even deployed to help police keep unarmed opposition supporters quiet. What was billed as a show of force against those the BNP calls anarchists looked to many as an ill-disguised pretext to lay into as many opposition leaders as possible.

In one side street more than 150 people were beaten up, tear-gassed and hospitalised, including several women, media crews and politicians. A former minister for home affairs, Mohammad Nasim, wasn't even on the street: RAB thugs just barged into his home and beat him senseless in his sitting room. When questioned about the brutality, a police spokesman told reporters they had "no right" to ask.

Bangladesh emerged from a bloody war for independence from Pakistan in 1971 and has been mired in poverty ever since. Half our 140 million population is officially "under-nourished". In the beginning, coups followed assassinations in a downward spiral that only ended when popular protests forced General Mohammed Ershad to hand over to civilians in 1990.

Since then, what passes for democracy has been a soap opera fronted by two women whose principal claim to leadership has been family ties to earlier, assassinated heads of state. Our intellectually challenged outgoing prime minister, Khaleda Zia, heads the BNP, set up by her late husband General Ziaur Rahman. He seized power in 1977 and indemnified those behind the assassination two years earlier of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, father of the nation. His daughter, Sheikh Hasina, now heads his Awami League.

Our political parties and their leaders do not like one other. Each shares a hopeless record of deceit, incompetence and corruption, in and out of power. It is a system that has stumbled on for 16 years, at least partly on the assumption that military rule is somehow old-fashioned. But in addition to the ongoing hartal issue, we have an Islamist insurgency that has been bombing courthouses and police stations across the country.

If the trouble on the streets continues while the caretaker government is in charge, and the BNP and Awami League fail to agree how to behave during the caretaker period, the military might be tempted to decide once more that they know what is best for us.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "At first I thought this has got to be a joke," Senator Conrad Burns told a press conference at the University of Montana, "because the idea of using bees to find landmines seemed absurd. But my scepticism vanished when I saw the results of tests using honey bees which had been attuned to the scent of TNT, and were attracted to high explosives just as though they were flowers. Between fifteen and twenty thousand people a year are killed by landmines, and until now the authorities have mostly used dogs to locate unexploded ordnance. That's slow and dangerous work for both the dogs and the dog handlers, but the little bees just fly straight across mine fields and hover around the explosives without any risk of detonating them, so we can see precisely where the bombs are. They're much more effective than dogs, and if we trained enough swarms of them, they could reduce the amount of time needed to sweep for mines by ten to fifteen fold."

University researcher Jerry Bromenshenk (who is also chairman of the Bee Alert

Technology company) explained that "the commercial applications of this technology are incredible. So far, we've trained the bees to track landmines and locate improvised explosive devices, but we could train them just as easily to find methamphetamine labs, dead bodies, or any number of other uses. Maybe even oil. Bees are the future. The defense appropriations budget for fiscal year 2007 is roughly $468 billion, and we only need $5 million to develop a species of superbee into a complete new defensive weapons system for this country. If we could get funding from the Army, it would be great for Homeland Security, and great for the Montana economy too. The bees are not only attracted to the landmines, but they also buzz around the guys who handled the explosives, and try to land on their hands and sting them. When you're looking for insurgents, the psychological influence of that could be enormous. If only we could convince the government that bees are not just a pest, but could be a vital ally in the War on Terror." *(Govexec Daily Briefing [USA], 3/8/06. Spotter: Petra van der Heijden)*

– ● –

● A Basic Cremation. Basic Yet Professional. I'll Come to Your Home.

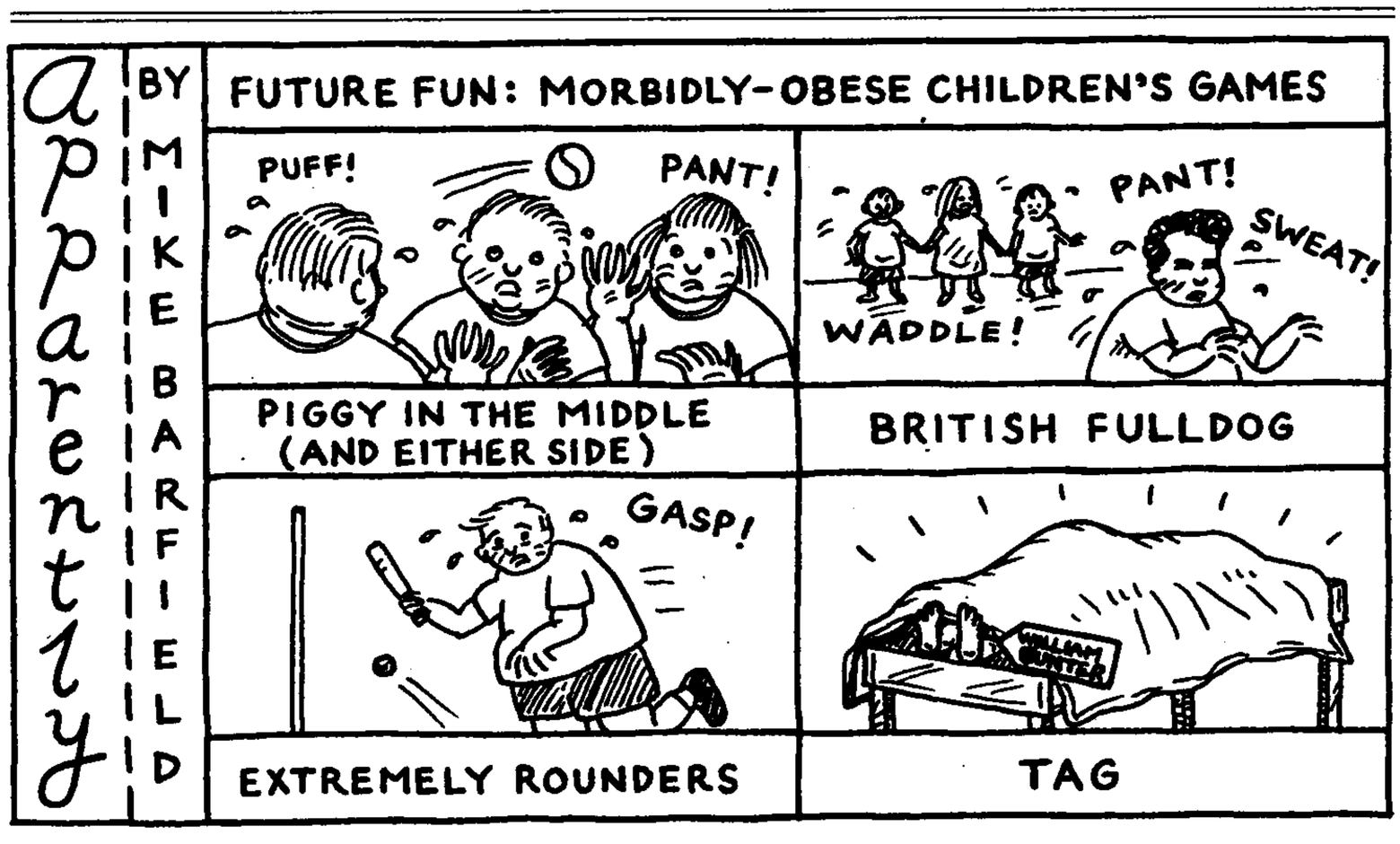
A Basic Cremation is for individuals and families who either do not wish to have a funeral or memorial service, or choose to arrange a memorial service on their own, directly with a church or other suitable facility, or even in their home. When a death occurs, we will go to your home, make the necessary arrangements, secure the medical certificate of death, provide a basic cremation body bag, and present the cremated remains to you in a basic no-nonsense box, all within a week. Total cost, including cremation fee, government administration fee, death certificate, and our fee, $695.00. That's all it costs to cremate a loved one, so why pay more?

Call for details. Preston Webb, 2826 McCoomb Drive, Coquillam, Vancouver. (Offer price covers Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley only).

A Basic Cremation. We're better than simple. We're Basic yet Professional! (Advertisement in The Vancouver Sun, 10/7/06. Spotter: Jennifer Scarlett-Smith)

– ● –

● "We were called to the University of Central Florida just after midnight," a police spokesman told reporters in Orlando, "because a fire had broken out in the Academic Village Dorms. There were no injuries, but we suspected arson, and after making enquiries, we arrested student Matthew Dansky on suspicion of having started the blaze. To our amazement, he readily admitted that he had started it by setting fire to a couch, but he said that he had not done so out of any criminal motive. Rather, he had started the fire because he thought 'it would be a good way to meet hot chicks in their night gear while the dorm was being evacuated.' As it happens, he didn't meet any women, hot or otherwise, and now that he's been arrested and taken to the Orange County Jail cooler, he won't be meeting any there either. Not for a long time." *(Local6 News [Florida], 19/7/06. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And may I firstly say how grateful I was for the literally sackloads of letters, texts and emails which you all sent me after the sermon I gave on our seaside outing to Manchester.

Here is just one message typical of so many others:

"Thank you, thank you, thank you for your truly inspiring, uplifting and deeply moving sermon. I was not the only one with tears in my eyes! How could you ever think about stepping down as our vicar, when you have so much still to contribute."

This wonderful and humbling note was signed simply 'Alastair'. But I know that it spoke for all of you!

As I stood there in the pulpit seeing you all rise to your feet in the pews, crying 'Alleluia', I can tell you from the bottom of my heart that I felt truly humbled.

How many people standing in that pulpit have ever had a reception like that from their congregation?

The answer is 'none'. And certainly not, dare I say it, the gentleman who spoke before me.

I don't want to disparage Mr Brown. We are all blessed with different talents, and perhaps Gordon will find his one day buried deep in the garden!

Some of us are granted what the good book calls 'the gift of tongues' – the ability to give brilliant and unforgettable sermons.

Others have the gift of prophecy – being able to make promises for the future!

Yet others have the gift of good looks, a beautiful wife and children (and can even compose catchy choruses on the guitar!).

But, hey, let us always remember that there are others less fortunate who have lesser talents, such as adding up numbers on their calculators and getting it wrong! (No names, but Gordon may know who we are all thinking of there!)

It's sad, isn't it, to see this type of person getting more and more embittered as the years go by, and it becomes ever more obvious that they are never going to realise their youthful dreams and that they are doomed to face a life of disappointment and failure!

But where was I? Yes, as I stood there looking down on you all with the organ playing that majestic theme from *Rocky 4*, I don't mind admitting that I had a real lump in my throat.

And I thought to myself "Are you really doing the right thing, Vicar, stepping down? Should you be leaving your flock unshepherded, prey to wolves and locusts and scorpions in these dark and uncertain times?"

And, you know, as I began to walk down the pulpit steps, I heard a voice as it were from on high, calling out "turn again. Tony, don't ever go. We need you to stay on forever and ever. Amen."

And, do you know, it was Cherie! Bless her! And I thought of those words from scripture which say "Out of the mouths of wives and spouses shall come forth wisdom"!

But then I remembered the very last words I had spoken, with genuine tears in my eyes. And you know what they were?

Let me remind you what they were. I said, "I am with you always".

I want you to remember those words of comfort in your understandable sadness, even grief, at the thought that I might be leaving you.

So as you queue up to lay your bunches of flowers wrapped in cellophane outside the vicarage gate, with their touching tributes 'We love you, Tony', 'You were the People's Vicar,' 'Gordon is rubbish' etc, I want you to treasure those words in your hearts.

And that is why at this week's evensong we shall be singing that wonderful old hymn to the tune of Brother James of Taylor's Air.

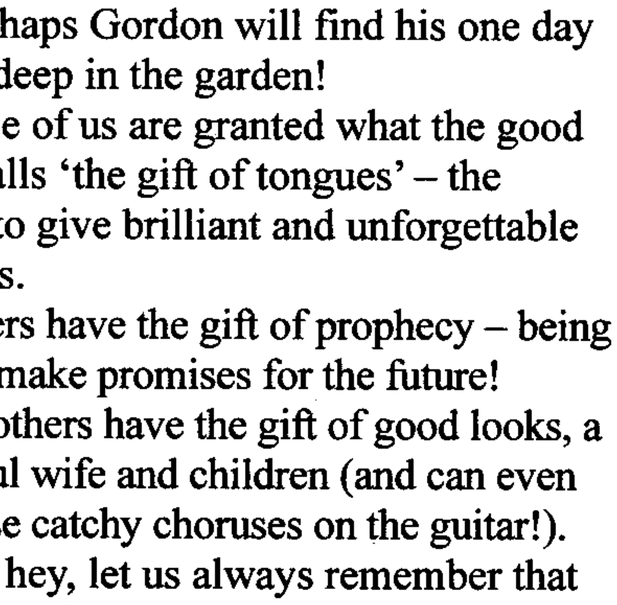
Winter, spring, summer or fall
All you've got to do is call
And I'll be there, yo, yo, yo,
You've got a friend in Tony.

You know something? I'm weeping already.

Yours in tears,

Tony

The Vicar's Manchester triumph, as seen by local artist Mr de la Nougerede



THIS WEEK'S ???? BRAIN TEASER ????

Gordon says he likes Tony. Cherie says Gordon is lying. Cherie then says she didn't say that. The woman standing next to her says that she did. Tony says the woman is a liar, but then admits that she was telling the truth. Can you work out who is the biggest liar of all of them? Is it: A) Gordon B) Tony C) Cherie

(Hint: the answer is A.)

T.B.

KIDZ KORNER

We had a very special occasion at the vicarage when a number of kids came round in the hope of winning a 'Blue Peter badge for interviewing' by asking some jolly tough questions!

Here's a few of our exchanges, which they tape recorded on their laptops.

Q. Vicar, what is your favourite colour?

A. Hey, there are so many colours and all of them are great in their own way!

Q. Has any famous person ever come to the vicarage since you've been there?

A, Well, apart from me, ha, ha, ha, I can think of lots! There's the Rev. Clintstone, of the Church of the Seven Day Fornicators. And the Rev. Dubya of the Church of the Latter Day Morons. And loads of pop stars like Cliff Richard and Bob Geldof!

Q. Who are they, we haven't heard of any of them?

A. Get rid of this kid, he's off-message (sound of scuffle).

Q. Is it true that you are a good cook, Vicar?

A. Hey, I'm pretty good at toast. And I can even do cornflakes, if I have to!

Q. My mum says you cook up a lot of lies!

A. Get rid of this one as well (more sounds of scuffling).

Q. Is it true that you are the best vicar the parish has ever had? Have I read that right?

A. Hey, that's not for me to say, but 'yes'.

Thanks to all the kids for coming, and special thanks to Mr Gould for organising such an enjoyable and imaginative event! T.B.

A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM MR PRESCOTT

One of the most moving moments at our parish outing was when Mr Prescott of the Working Men's Club stood up amongst us and said that he wished to make a public confession of his sins. Here is what John said:

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry that I let myself down. I'm sorry I got caught. I'm sorry I've got to give up my job and my nice house. I'm sorry of course that I let the parish down and I'd like to thank Tony for forgiving me and keeping me on, even though I've done nothing wrong. Anyway, anyone who'd like to buy me a beer as a token of repentance, I'd be happy to accept it – especially if it's from the blonde lass over there with a short skirt!"

EXCLUSIVE TO THE EYE

BLUNKETT'S LAST TAPE

EXCLUSIVE extracts from the sensational book and television programme that is in all other papers as well

THROUGHOUT my political life my main concern has been to keep my private life private. This was particularly important when I was occupying the most senior position in the government and taking tough decisions that affected every single person in the country.

It was obviously vital that no one should know I was cracking up because then the public would have had no confidence in me and would have demanded that I be sacked.

September 2004

NO ONE has ever suffered as much as me. I have probably suffered more than anyone in the whole world has ever suffered. My suffering makes the First World War look like a vicarage tea party. And a particularly enjoyable one at that. The media are behaving like East German SS Guards. When I got home a photographer from the Sun was waiting for me. "Give us a smile, David," he demanded. "You try smiling when you are suffering more than anyone else has ever suffered," I shouted back.

Perhaps I was wrong to describe all my colleagues as "useless idiots" in a book by Stephen Pollard. But why do they hate me? What have I ever done to them? At least some people were sympathetic.

October 2004

AT a reception in honour of the proprietor of the Daily Star I meet Prince Charles who offers kind words.

"We've all had affairs with other people's wives and had to go through hell. I really sympathise with myself."

What a great man he is. No wonder he is so popular with everyone in the country. Unlike John Prescott and Jack Straw who I really hate. But why do they hate me? Don't they know how much I am suffering?

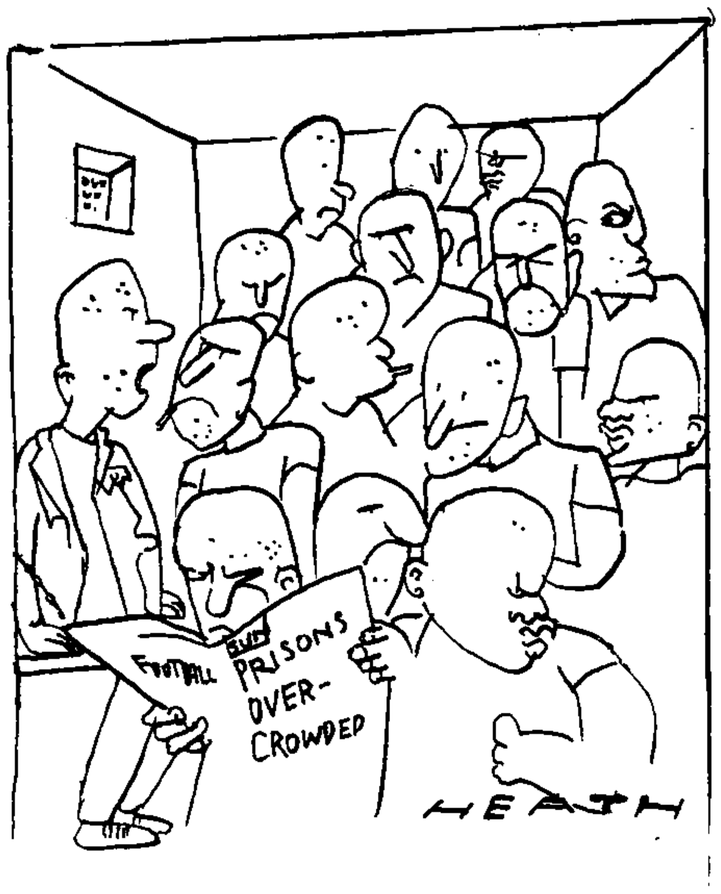
After the terrible events that led to my unfair resignation which made the Second World War look like another vicarage tea party – only this time with jelly and custard to make it even more enjoyable – I spoke to the Prime Minister.

December 2004

Tony hugged me and wept. "We cannot do without you, David, but you are fired." He has always been my greatest supporter except when he had to fire me. I left his office feeling a weight of suffering equivalent to the entire history of mankind. It makes the Third World War look like a vicarage tea party, except one with Lemon Drizzle Cake and *(cont. p. 94)*

© Fishwick and Tweed £19.99

TOMORROW: How dare the media invade my privacy when I want to sell it to Bloomsbury and get my share of the Harry Potter gold?



"I remember when solitary meant solitary"

REID ANNOUNCES PRISON ACTION PLAN

by Our Home Office Staff **Phil Cells**

THE Home Secretary Dr John Reid outlied *(surely "outlined"? Ed.)* plans to solve the crisis of Britain's overcrowded jails.

Dr Reid said, "The current situation is that there are too many people in prison. The obvious solution is to reduce the number of prisons, thereby reducing the number of people in them."

The plan has been welcomed by Mrs Hewitt who is going to extend it to the NHS.

"With fewer hospitals we would have fewer patients – which has got to be good news for Britain."

Sunday 1 October 8.00pm
Dacorum Live! presents
Brain Sewell
Adventures of an Art Critic
The Bucks Herald

BREAKING NEWS
EUROPE
Broken leg fears for Hargreaves
England international Owen Hargreaves could face a lengthy spell out of the game with a suspected broken leg.
BBC website

"It's a great ventriloquist act – you can't see her lips move"

PRESCOTT SHOULD WEAR VEIL – MUSLIM WOMEN SPEAK OUT

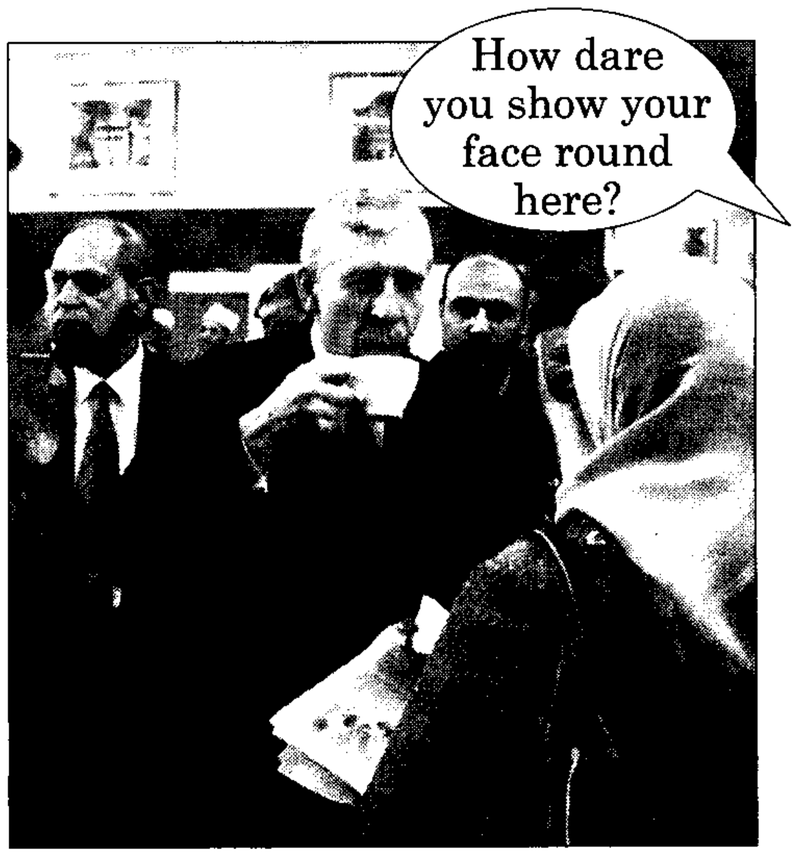
by Our Islamic Staff **Michael Buerqua**

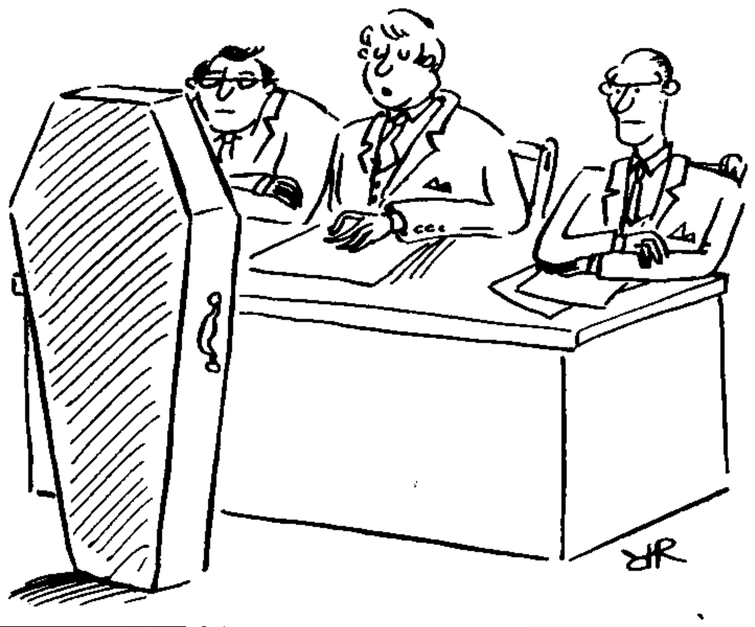
REPRESENTATIVES of the Muslim Community today demanded that John Prescott should cover his face completely when meeting them in person.

Said spokeswoman Tamsin Yashmak, "As a sign of respect, Prescott should wear a mask. It is difficult to hold a serious conversation with him when you have to look at his large, bloated, sweaty face."

Women Should Not Wear Veil Or Anything Else – Prescott Spells It Out

Full story plus pix **8**





"Even taking the existing employment legislation into account, we still feel you may be too old for this position, Mr Carter"

Mary Ann Bighead

On The Autism Row

What's all the fuss about? I was interviewing the Tory Shadow Chancellor George Osborne, who is very clever (but not quite as clever as me!), and I asked him a very clever question about whether he was autistic. George then said "We're not getting into Gordon Brown yet" and everyone laughed at how clever we were, especially me for cleverly raising the autism idea.

I couldn't believe it when the next day people complained that we were being offensive! Honestly, some people are very stupid. Perhaps they are all autistic! Because only seriously unclever people don't know that men like Gordon Brown *are* further along the autistic spectrum than women and have an obsession with facts. And that's a fact. What's also a fact is that some men have low emotional intelligence, ie they are not as clever as a woman like me who is highly gifted emotionally and is far too aware of other people's sensibilities to go round needlessly offending them!

So, if you were offended by the autism joke then you shouldn't have been. And I should know because I'm very clever.

© Mary Ann Bighead 2006.

Inside The World's Most Cut-Off Community – An Eyewitness Report

by Our Man In Bournemouth MARTIN AMISH

YESTERDAY no one had heard of them. But today the whole world is focussed on one of the strongest sects to have survived into the 21st century.

The Torish, their menfolk strangely garbed in archaic three-piece suits and their women forced to wear long, outmoded dresses and floral hats, have turned their back on the modern world.

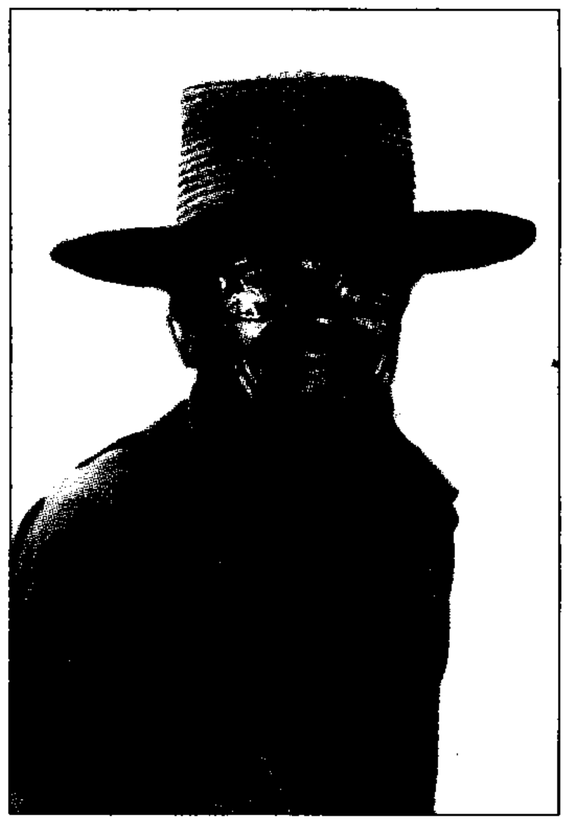
They refuse to use mobile phones or the internet and cling to their old beliefs – law and order, the right to hunt foxes and the need to keep the pound.

They send their children to special schools where they are indoctrinated into Torish values, such as playing a straight bat, keeping a stiff upper lip and not letting the side down.

Silly Buggles

The origins of this bizarre and outlandish community date back to the early 1980s, when a Grantham housewife, later to be hailed as a saint, began to see visions and proclaimed that society didn't exist.

Inspired by her words, thousands of starry-eyed devotees flocked to join the movement, convinced that if only they could live apart from the modern world, they could live by



traditional values based on the family, hard work and the return of capital punishment.

Sadly, however, the movement lost its way and dwindled into a tiny, increasingly elderly rump.

Their distinctive language was dying out, studded with such phrases as "good evening", "large gin and tonic, please", "I couldn't finish the crossword today – could you?" and "good old Maggie".

However weird most of us might think the rest of the Torish sect, even stranger is the leader of a one-man breakaway group known as Borish.

With his wild, flowing hair and unkempt appearance, Borish believes in free love and eating crisps, and is ready to preach his heretical message wherever the media are gathered to hear it.

THE OLD
BEANO
Featuring
Dave Snooty and his chums
Dave old chap, have we actually GOT any policies?
Of course, dear boy. For example it's my firm policy...
NOT to have any policies!!!!
Right - now let's all go hug an oik!!
TODAY'S SPECIALS
IN THE SOUP HUMBLE PIE FOOL
Oo-er, readers - I'm rather fond of pies
PORKY pies!!!
BIKE SHED
FURTIVE WINK
Sorry, darling, I'll be working late!

60 YEARS OF RADIO THREE

This evening we mark the 60-year contribution of Radio 3 to the nation's cultural life with a special performance of the recently written oratoria *Judas Macca* by Lady Paul McCartney, including the legendary aria *Hey Judas Maccabeus*.

WHERE HE STANDS – CAMERON SPELLS IT OUT

by Our Man In Bournemouth
Matthew D'Anconservative

THEY said he was all style and no substance. But yesterday Tory leader David Cameron proved them wrong, with a wide-ranging set of firm commitments which staked the ground on which he will fight and win the election.

Here are the bold, rock-solid pledges that mark out the Cameron agenda as forged in steel.

MARRIAGE

"The Tory party is firmly committed to the institution of marriage. It is the bedrock of our society. And, of course, by the term 'marriage' I include civil partnerships between same sex partners, co-habitees, single parents and anyone else trying to bring up children or just living alone watching television."

THE HEALTH SERVICE

"The greatest British institution of them all. The Tory Party will defend the NHS against everyone who is opposed to it. We will resist any further attempts by this government to involve the private sector, except, of course, when it's needed, which it often is, and then, of course, we are right behind them."

THE ENVIRONMENT

"Everyone is now agreed that the most important issue confronting mankind is the environment. Unless urgent action is taken now by the entire world, we face the prospect of massive global warming, ice caps melting, polar bears swimming for their lives and some of us no longer able to take holidays in the Maldives because they are under water. We've got to stop flying around the world and go on our bikes instead. So committed are we to this that a Conservative government will look into giving a tax break to every family which installs a wind turbine on its bicycles to power their lights."

EUROPE

"No one's interested in this."

IMMIGRATION

"Ditto."

IRAQ

"We are right behind our Armed Forces who have a difficult job to do and do it jolly well." *(Pause for applause).*

AMERICA

"The Conservative Party is pledged to be in full support of George Bush, but we reserve the right at all times to criticise him. We will never give in to knee-jerk anti-Americanism, but we must also be aware of the dangers of slavish pro-Americanism. Was it not the great Senator John McCain who yesterday said I was 'the JFK of today' and you can't get fairer than that!"

TAX CUTS

"The Conservative Party has always stood for lower taxes, unless of course it is necessary to have higher taxes, in which case it would of course be the height of irresponsibility to commit ourselves in advance to saying whether taxes should go up or down."

BORIS

"Aren't we lucky to have him, so that nobody bothers to analyse what I am saying too closely! Thanks, Boris!"

(Prolonged laughter and headlines)

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT

"We shall continue to support the government whenever we believe that what they are doing is in the interests of the country, which is why I shall be voting for them at the next election."

Lives of the Saints

No. 94 St David of Cameron And The Killer Jellyfish

by award-winning historian **Brother Andrew of Roberts**

And there was living in those days a much-revered young monk named myself. And on one fine afternoon this admirable scholar had it in mind to take a healing dip in the ocean.

Imagine his horror when suddenly there manifested itself from the deep a mighty throng of deadly jellyfish, a hideous green in colour and some of them many feet across.

Brother Andrew was sore afraid as he saw these monster leviathans bearing down on him, their tentacles poised to fill him with lethal venom.

At just that moment, watching from the shore was a young nobleman of that country who witnessed the monk's plight with deep compassion. It was the blessed David of Cameron.

And David did not hesitate, but cast himself into the waves, determined to save Brother Andrew from a watery death.

No sooner had he reached the hapless victim, struggling for his life, than the jellyfish swam away in terror, never to be seen again.

And David placed Brother Andrew on his back and took him gently and safely to the shore.

And many years later, when this story was revealed to the world by Brother Andrew, the people of that land were amazed and said with one accord, "We don't believe it. You've just made it up to crack up your old mate David, to make us think he is a saint and should be prime minister."

"That is not true," replied Brother Andrew. "I have told this story only to get some publicity for my new book."

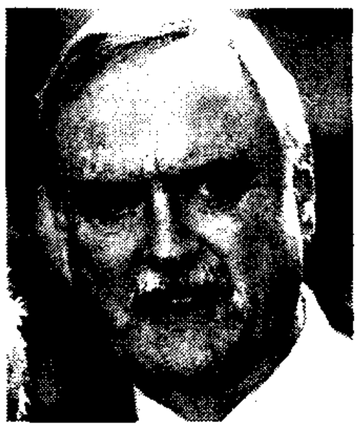
Brother Andrew's new book 'A History of the Anglo-Saxon Speaking Peoples' is published this week by Snipcock and Tweed at £25.99.

"Um... perhaps we need to stress the green a little more, and the Tory a little less"

Starting Today – the Sensational Diaries That Take The Lid Off The Wacky World Of

MONTY PALIN'S FLYING CIRCUS

by Michael Python



JOHN CLEESE – "difficult to work with, but a very funny man"

GRAHAM CHAPMAN – "no longer with us, but a very funny man"

ERIC IDLE – "bit of a loner, but a very funny man"

Now read on:

March 17 1968

John [Cleese] rings me up to say he has rewritten the "Dead Carrot" sketch. He wants me to be the man in the shop, not Graham. I told him he should be the man in the shop. He said he would think about it.

November 3 1969

A big meeting to discuss the "Dead Carrot" sketch which is continuing to give us problems. Graham was drunk and told Terry he shouldn't be the man behind the counter. Terry was upset, and so was John, but I do everything I can to calm things down.

June 12 1971

Filming starts on "The Life Of Carrot". Terry thinks Graham is too drunk to play Napoleon. Terry wants to be Napoleon himself, but Eric is unhappy about having to play Joan of Arc's mother.

February 8 1973

John has come up with a brilliant idea. Why doesn't he wear a bowler hat instead of a turban in the crucifixion scene? I wish I'd thought of that! John really is a genius.

September 21 1975

"Carrot" opens to terrific reviews. We are now established as the funniest comedy team in the history of the world. But with this fame and respect comes a heavy problem of money. What shall we do with it? Only the 80s will tell.

'I Was Monty's Python – The Years of Achievement 1962-1984' is Radio 4's Book of the Week, read out by the author.

"You're not impressing anybody with this rebellious individualism, young man"

Controversial 'Office' Is Shortlisted For Turner Prize

By Our Art Staff **Brian R. Sewell**

AN installation by the acclaimed Barclay Brothers has been shortlisted for the prestigious Turner Prize.

The installation looks like a normal office and features a handful of "workers" supposedly producing a national newspaper called the Daily Telegraph.

Art critics have said, "It's silly, pointless and rubbish. And that's just the newspaper".

The Barclay Brothers, however, defended their handiwork, saying "It challenges people on many levels. On one level it says, 'You're fired' and on another it says 'So are you!'"

DAILY TELEGRAPH | Friday, 13 October 2006

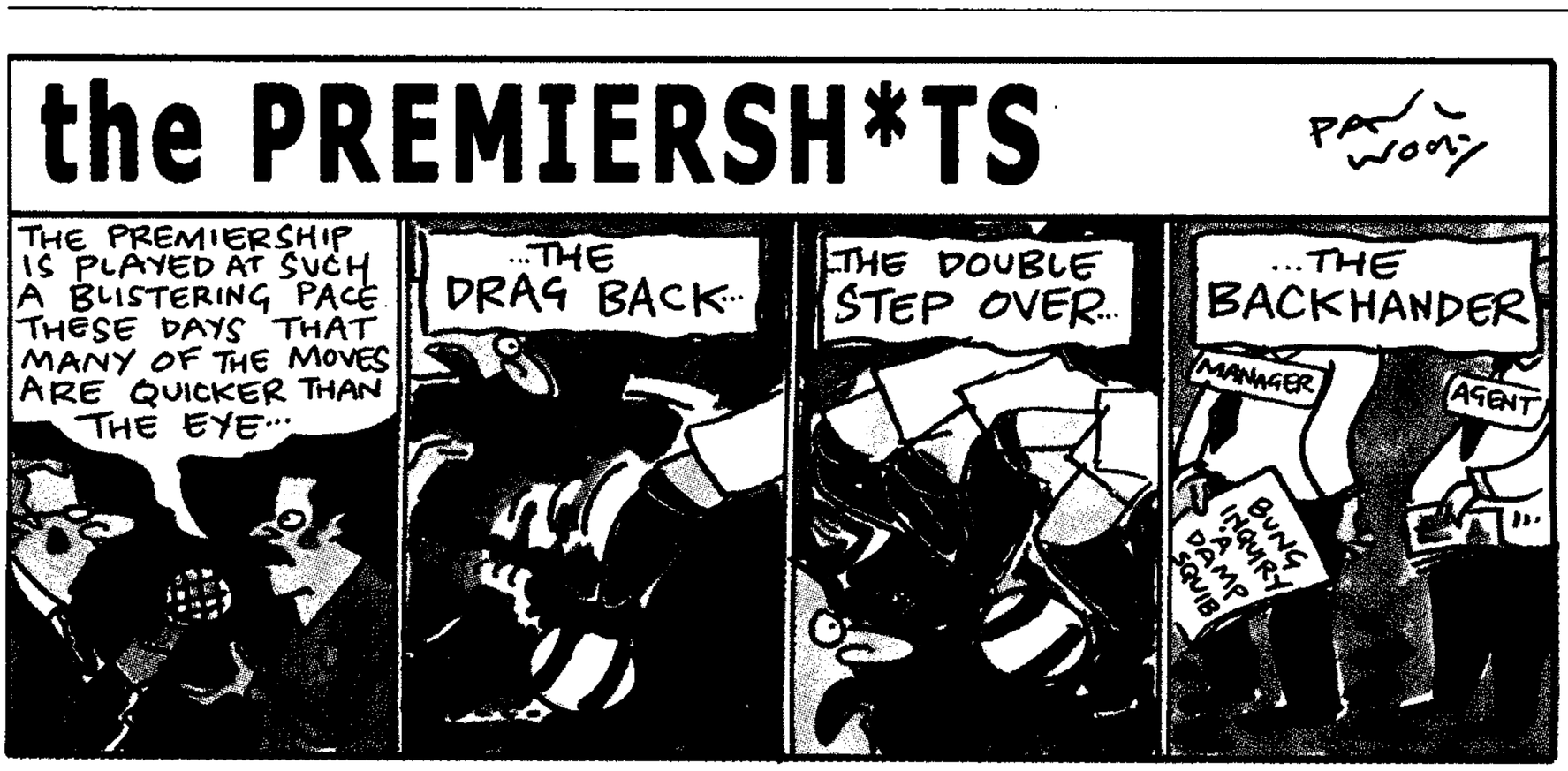
Daily Telegraph Gets Rid Of Sub-Editors

By Our Graduate Trainee Phil Blogs

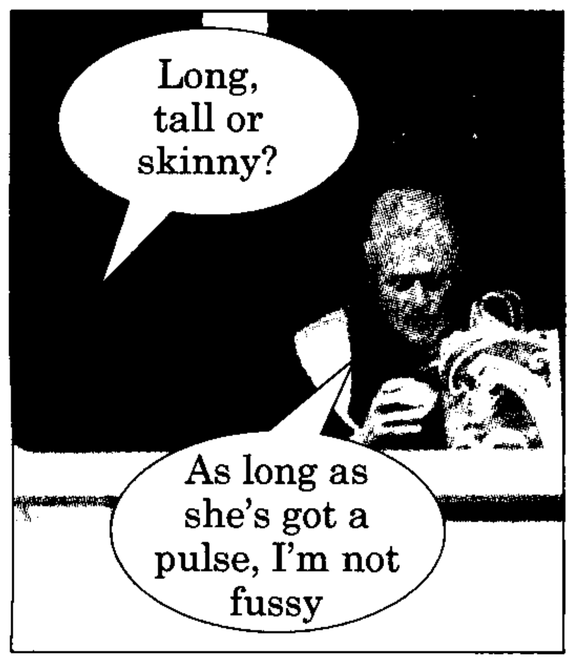
IN A move to increase efficiency at its new headquarters in Victoria, the Daily Telegraph newspooper has decided to disponse with sab-editers.

Said one of the Barclay Twains, "We have no nude for sobs here. They are expansive and a waist of tome. Our reporting stiff can do the jab unstead."

The Barclay Twits are 198. *(Please check. Oh, sorry, I forgot there aren't any subs.)*


the PREMIERSH*TS
PAT MOONEY
THE PREMIERSHIP IS PLAYED AT SUCH A BLISTERING PACE THESE DAYS THAT MANY OF THE MOVES ARE QUICKER THAN THE EYE...
...THE DRAG BACK...
...THE DOUBLE STEP OVER...
...THE BACKHANDER
MANAGER
AGENT
BUNS INQUIRY DDMP SQUIB

BILL CLINTON VISITS STARBUCKS



The Alternative Rocky Horror Service Book

No. 94 A Revised Service of Matrimony

The President *(for it is he or she)*: Brethren and sistren (but mainly sistren). We are gathered here together to join this unhappy couple in the state of deadly matrimony, which is an estate ordained by a patriarchal God and greatly to be feared.

All: Too right!

President: Do you, N or M *(here he or she may say Shane or Rhiannon or similar)* really want to go ahead with this, given the likelihood that it will lead to domestic violence?

N & M: If you put it like that, we may have to give it another thought.

President: For does it not say in Holy Scripture that a man shall leave his parents and beat up his wife?

N or M: Oh, no one mentioned that before.

President: Do you, M, really want to "honour and obey" some man who will use this as an excuse to beat you black and blue every time he's been out for an evening drinking with his mates, which is what all men do, frankly, unless they're gay, of course, in which case we should be ordaining them rather than marrying them?

All: Ha ha ha!

President: In the light of the above, do you hereby renounce the evil of marriage and determine to lead a new life in holy cohabitation?

N & M: I think we're well out of it.

(Here the congregation shall sing a hymn, possibly "Fight The Good Wife With All Thy Might" or "Don't Abide With Me [I Can't Abide You Either]")

The Dismissal

President: I hereby dismiss marriage as an outdated, sexist plot designed to keep women in a state of perpetual submission by use of such patriarchal stereotypical language as "Lord", "Father", "Mankind", "Husband" etc, which to my mind is frankly sickening and has led to thousands of years of wives being murdered and raped in the name of so-called Christianity.

All: Indeedy-doody! Tell it like it is, sister!

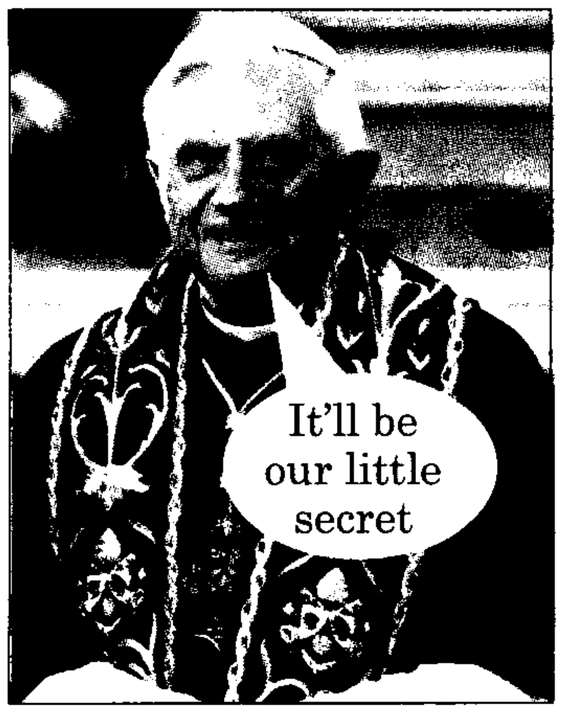
Recessional

(The unmarried couple shall then not sign the register and shall leave the church, accompanied on the organ by some suitable voluntary, such as "I'm Not Getting Married In The Morning")

CATHOLIC PRIEST DIDN'T MOLEST BOY

- Pope Protestant
- Bears Buy Portaloo

CATHOLIC CHURCH ATTACKS PANORAMA 'CHILD ABUSE' DOCUMENTARY



LATE MADONNA NEWS

MADONNA's publicist has confirmed that both mother and child are doing well, after the star's third child was successfully delivered yesterday by DHL.

"It was an amazingly smooth and pain-free delivery, as DHL guarantee to have third-world orphans to the door of a superstar's mansion by nine the next morning, or their money back," said a *(cont. p. 94)*

MADONNA ADOPTS AFRICAN BABY

LATE CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

THE Church of England today confirmed that it will in future be opening up 25% of spaces in its classrooms to the children of parents who actually believe in God.

"Formerly, of course, 100% of places at our schools went to the children of parents who attend Church grudgingly every Sunday so as to avoid having to send their children to local rubbish state schools.

"This we now accept was discriminatory and *(cont. p. 94)*

JUDGE AND ROAD-SWEEPER SWAP PLACES

by Our Features Staff **Marcel Berliner**

A ROAD-SWEEPER, Mr Derek Spiggot, 47, went undercover as a High Court judge last week "to see first hand how the other half lives".

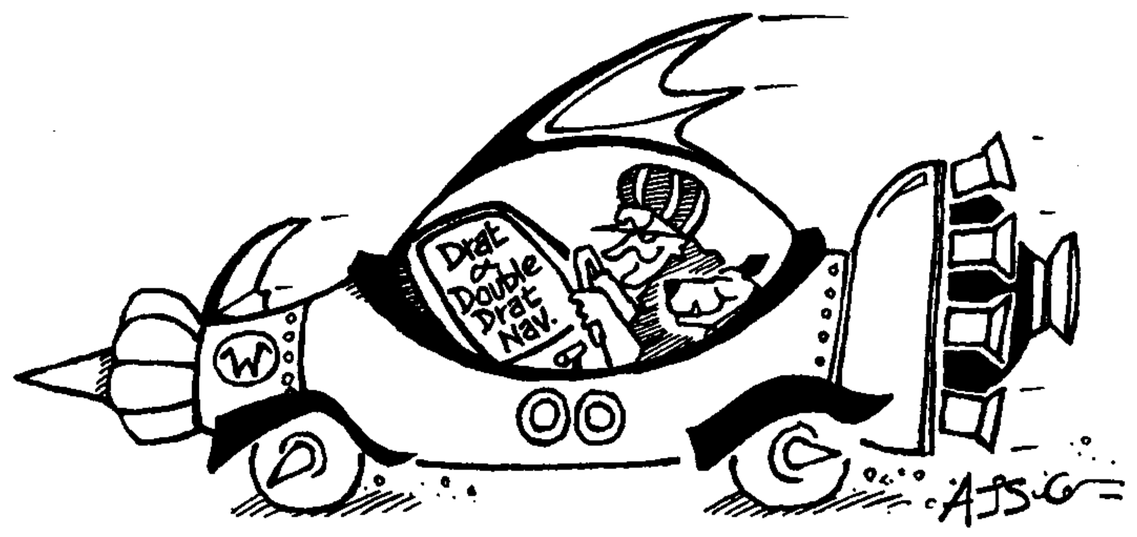
"It was a fascinating insight into the British judicial system," said Mr Spiggot. "I put on the wig and gown and no one was any the wiser. I did all the things that judges do – falling asleep, having lunch at the Garrick and asking, 'Who, pray, are the Arctic Monkeys?'. It was a good laugh but, on the whole, I prefer cleaning the streets to judging."

"The age discrimination legislation is starting to bite, I see"

IN TODAY'S EYE

Why we all stopped having the Observer

For years every Sunday, couplesIying in bed enjoyed the Observer, even if it only took 5 minutes. But now no-one is doing it any more. What went wrong? Was it because it was full of really boring stuff about sex that you don't want to read? Yes.



CAKES TOPS FEE LEAGUE
'I'm so proud' says Head

by Our Education Staff **John Mortarboard**

A DELIGHTED Mr Kipling was today celebrating the triumph of the prestigious Midland independent school, St. Cakes *(Motto: Quis Paget Entrat)*, in the league tables for the Country's Most Expensive Schools.

Even Eton at £25,000 per week could not match the £1million a term that St. Cakes demands of its pupils. Dr Kipling was quick to praise the Bursar, Wing Commander von Hoogstraten (O.C), for his part in raising fee standards to the current level.

"St. Cakes is now so successful that pupils are fighting to get in – literally so in the case of some of the Russian oligarch parents and the warlords from Central Africa."

"Of course we still have some British parents but they find it increasingly hard to match the high quality of money from overseas.

ST. CAKES FACT FILE

Alumni include:

Sir Stephen Fry
(Baftas, 1972-1979)

Jordan
(Crumpets, 1995-1996)

Sir Alan Sugar
(Amstrads, 1962-1966)

Conrad Black
(Chokeys, 1954-1959)

Jeffrey Archer was *never* at St. Cakes though in his Who's Who entry he claims to have been Head Boy.

A Spin Doctor Writes

MANY of us at some time or other suffer from this debilitating illness, *Feeling Fuckingus Shitus,* to give it its full medical name. Even I myself got very depressed at the prospect of losing my job and being found guilty of hounding Dr Kelly to death. Such things can of course be very lowering.

But there is a remedy and I recommend getting a High Court Judge to exonerate you and blame the BBC instead.

In my case the depression lifted at once and I was able to get on with the rest of my life. Unlike Dr Kelly who was dead.

© A Spin Doctor

MODERN NURSERY RHYMES

Little Tommy Tucker's
A right little fucker.
You've only got to look at him
To know that he'll become a crim.

BLUE PETER MANDELSON

Advertisement

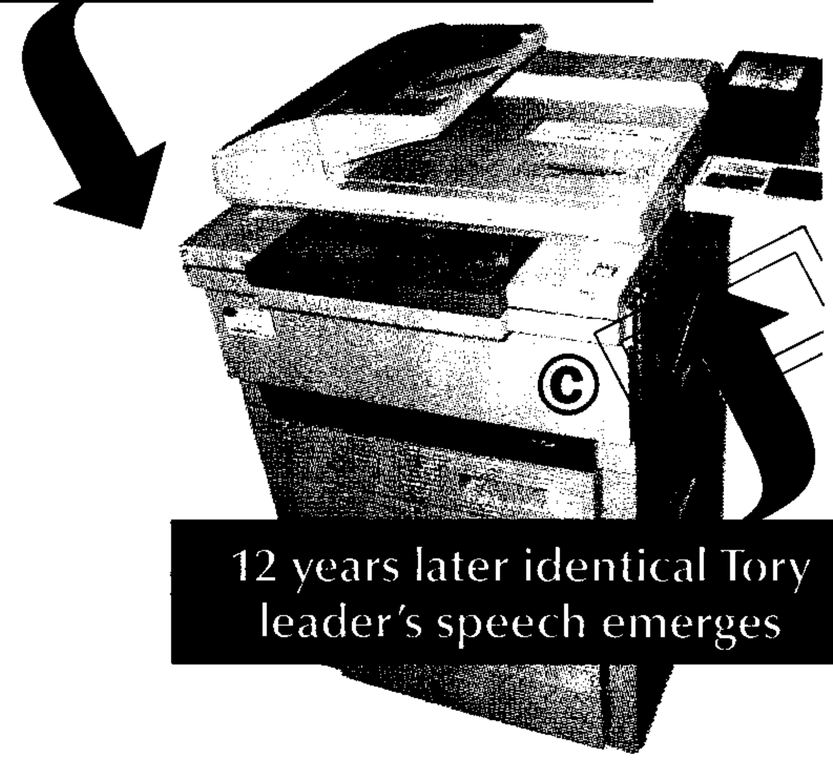
Living Couple

required for country Pub/ Hotel and Restaurant based in Hertfordshire.

Metro

NEW **Cameron 2006 copier**

Insert 1994 Labour conference leader's speech



12 years later identical Tory leader's speech emerges

Guaranteed: 100% identical reproduction

DIARY

JANET STREET PORTER

I was literally shaking with rage. How dare those snooty bastards do this to me? Talk about total shits! If this was what you call democracy, well, you can count me bloody out!

It was 1968, and I had just bought myself a mega-new super-cool Mini when a toffee-nosed policeman – bloody pig, more bloody like! – only started telling me I couldn't bloody drive it in the so-called "wrong" direction down a one-way street.

I went into a major strop, I can tell you. Why the fuck not you bloody moron? I asked him. But he wouldn't listen to reason. He was literally doing my head in. Martin Luther King had been shot dead in Dallas just so's I could be free, and now the bloody fascists wouldn't even let me drive in the direction of my choice.

Call this a free country? Fat fucking chance! Interestingly, I never met Martin Luther King as such but I was once told it was my name he was calling out at the end, bless. And I once became a Black Panther for a bit, before I got bored.

Me and four other legendary Sixties figures were packed into my Mini that historic day. As I remember, there was Jimi Hendrix in the front, perched on the knee of top model Twiggy, with fashionable astronaut Neil Armstrong in the back alongside mega bearded Russian novelist Alex Solyzhy-whatever.

Crikey, talk about randy. Neil Armstrong was trying to get off with me. The guy couldn't keep his eyes off my stunning legs, and who could literally blame him! But I didn't fancy him – not in that helmet and fatso space suit. So I told him so in no uncertain terms. Look Neil, ducky, I said, I might be one small step for mankind, I said, but it's a step you're not bloody taking, so why don't you just fuck the fuck off?

Welcome to Swinging London! Over the next decade, I would be literally at the centre of the art and music scene in London's super-trendy East Croydon. By then I was a Buddhist, but only for a while: I've never fancied smug bald geezers with beer bellies, even if they are all hands!

I was always first in the queue to see the latest trendy movie at East Croydon's superhip Odeon Cinema. But most of them were bloody dreary, I can tell you. *2001: A Space Bloody Odyssey* was far-fetched and told me fuck-all about life as I knew it. *Kes*? Who wants to watch a bloody bird all night? Talk about pitiful! *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Certainly not me, deary – I'd've given her a slap and told her to get a fucking life. *A Man for All Seasons* was a right bore too – I mean, lighten up, Sir Thomas, and let the bloke with the beard fuck who he bloody wants, it's not doing anyone any harm.

The Sixties was a truly happening decade. The list of my husbands and lovers reads like a roll-call of fashionable London. Top weatherman Michael Fish, trendy TV presenter John Noakes, man-about-town Reginald Maudling, the lot, top Eastern cleric Rev. Moon. None of them was perfect. Far from it. I once had that Sir Roy Strong on my waterbed but he just moaned about it getting his bloody moustaches in a twist, and I soon got bored.

Everything that happened in that decade was just bloody amazing, and I was at the centre of it. When I first heard that Jimi Hendrix had choked to death on his own vomit, I thought to myself, that's bloody weird, I was feeling a bit queasy the other day too, but, unlike Jimi, I took a Setler. Same when the news came through about the Paris riots: my first thought was though I'd never been to Paris, I'd once had a fling with this Austrian bloke who'd been there.

And I was at the centre of some truly momentous historical events, like Alvin Stardust's legendary first gig at the Rialto, Godalming. Alvin – later to become famous as Gary Glitter – played a bloody knockout set and afterwards we went clubbing in fashionable Abinger Hammer. I used to love clubbing, before it got boring.

Assassinations, bloodbaths, personal tragedies, earthquakes and the whole Vietnam thing too: the Sixties was a bloody brilliant decade to live through. I'll never forget the tragic day Robert Kennedy was assassinated. I was wearing a pair of small pink and red knitted hotpants and matching sweater, topped with a peppermint green sleeveless goatskin jacket from Dorothy Bis in Paris. My first thought was deep distress because I'd only gone and left my new lime-green Biba cap at home. But later that day I changed into my Jean Muir red silk romper suit with tartan platform shoes in Bobby's honour. We'd never actually done it, least not that I remembered, but I'd certainly fancied him from afar.

By then I was the top writer for top magazine Petticoat, so as a tribute I wrote a double page spread saying that The Kennedy Look was definitely "in" – all you had to do to become the centre of attention was put on a suit and lie flat on your back in a crowded spot and the whole world would come flocking around.you, 'til you got bored.

Senior executives just slavered over me with my great legs and personality to match. But, sorry guys, I was determined to make my own way and become the mega media legend that is now Janet Street-Porter.

On January 1st 1970, I was the very first person to notice that the Sixties had become the Seventies. It happened overnight.

I set out to literally revolutionise serious broadcasting in this country. Move over, grandad! For too long, the news had been delivered by dreary old middle-aged men in suits who looked like they'd just heard their bloody cat had died. Watching boring Kenneth Kendall delivering news of a Welsh mining disaster on the Six O'Clock News, you just knew the guy didn't have the foggiest about going out and having a fab time.

I set out to change all that shit – and how! I wanted the BBC to be a totally NOW organisation. "'Ere, Kendall!" I said to him, "Get the fuck out of that bloody suit and tie, put on these denims and a cutting-edge T-shirt and the next time you report a disaster you can at least look as though you're enjoying it!" He looked daggers at me, just because I was a perfect size 10 and he wasn't. So what? Over the next few years, I turned the BBC into a really happening mega youth organisation. But then I got bored and decided to move on.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE NEW AGE DISCRIMINATION LAWS, TROY?
DUNNO MUCH ABOUT THEM, DAD BUT THEY'RE PROBABLY A GOOD THING...
THESE DAYS, WE SHOULD TREAT ALL MEMBERS OF SOCIETY AS EQUALS I RECKON.
WE'VE ALREADY GOT LAWS ABOUT DISCRIMINATING AGAINST PEOPLE ON THE GROUNDS OF RACE, SEX, DISABILITY ETCETERA...
SO WHY SHOULD NEW AGE FOLLOWERS BE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST?
WHAT?
SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS ARE NEO-PAGAN HIPPIES...

Literary Review

Unspeakable, inedible

Humble Pie
Gordon Ramsay
(HarperCollins, £18.99)

White Slave
Marco Pierre White
(Orion, £20)

IS IT a coincidence? No sooner does one roaring behemoth of modern cooking publish his warts 'n' more warts autobiography, than the other one, stamping his vast feet in the primeval swamp, publishes his too. There they stand, rending the air with their cries, tearing up trees with their bare paws and then lightly sautéing them, maybe with some caramelised leeks on the side. Which one will win? Does anyone care?

Marco Pierre White is the elder of the two and the only one to flaunt a phallic cigar on his front cover. He, or rather his ghost, tells his story with a breathless, melodramatic tone that might be funny if it were not also rather disturbing. White's mother died when he was six and he has clearly never recovered. Everything he has achieved since has been an attempt to fill this unfillable gap, as he himself points out, over and over again, like someone who has discovered therapy late in life and won't stop telling you about it.

Of course no one in world history has worked harder. "When I turned seventeen on 11 December 1978 I had a day off, but I still went into work." Twenty-hour days were routine. "I could take the bollockings because I had been toughened up by my childhood." Having taken them, he then dishes them out to the poor bastards he hires to work for him. "In order to achieve my dream I reckoned I needed a brigade with army-standard discipline and, as I learned at Gavroche, discipline is born out of fear."

He is a man obsessed: indeed, casual readers bored with his relentless boasting may amuse themselves by seeing if he can go a page without using the words "Michelin star". Otherwise he is generally settling scores with the many thousands of individuals he seems to have fallen out with, all of whom did Marco wrong. It's a bizarre book – long, solipsistic, operatically boring, less of an autobiography than a psychological case history. You too might need intensive therapy, should you ever reach the end of it.

Gordon Ramsay, five years younger, was a protégé of White's and in some senses could now be said to have surpassed him. Certainly in the publishing sense, for this is Ramsay's tenth book, albeit his first without recipes. Like White, he endured a terrible childhood: his father was a violent, alcoholic tyrant, and Ramsay feels he could easily have gone the same way as his younger brother, who ended up a heroin addict. Instead he went the same way as Marco Pierre White.

No one in world history has worked harder. "I'm as driven as any man you'll ever meet. I can't ever sit still. Holidays are impossible." And nothing he does ever satisfies him. "I still see a little boy who is desperate to escape, and anxious to please." Reading these books back-to-back is a little like having a recurring nightmare. "She was amazing – though we don't talk now, it all ended rather badly." Of course it did: for these men it always does.

Ramsay's book, though, is much less revealing than White's: it's shorter, more guarded, more carefully edited. Some parts of his personal history he races through as though he has a train to catch. As in life, his regular use of the F-word sometimes feels a little studied, as though we all know that Gordon's a bit like that, so there has to be at least one a page, even though it might stand out as slightly fucking unnecessary.

There are some typically sensitive bons mots: "Before I met Jackie, I used to feel that sex was like sharpening a pencil. You stick it in there, and grind it around." All the ghost's care cannot conceal his subject's monumental self-regard, or his very particular attitude to women. Of two relationships he writes: "Why did Tana succeed where Ros had failed?" In other words, he was the catch: if the relationship didn't work it was the woman's fault. Very little, we get the impression, is ever Gordon's fault.

The main lesson to be learned from these books is that the restaurant kitchen is the last refuge of the unreconstructed macho twat. Needless to say, each tears the other apart in his book, apparently threatened by the other's mere existence. And on they battle, dinosaurs both, doomed (one hopes) to eventual extinction.

Books & Bookmen

■ DAVID Blunkett's publishers at Bloomsbury may be viewing this week's newspaper serialisations and TV specials with mixed feelings. All good publicity, no doubt, but with many political memoirs there's a danger that readers will feel they've had the best bits and won't bother shelling out for the book.

Normally this doesn't matter, since the publisher recoups much of the advance from selling the newspaper extracts. In Blunkett's case, however, his wily agent Ed Victor hung on to the serial rights – which means Bloomsbury has to earn back the £400,000 it paid Blunkett entirely from sales of the book and the CD.

Oh, and the Braille edition, of course.

■ ANOTHER academic publisher seems to be taking the Maxwell approach to staff pensions.

Facing a £14m deficit in its pension scheme, Cambridge University Press (CUP) bosses have decided to fix pensions to employees' salaries at 1 October this year, rather than base them on their final salary which for most people would be much higher. Any link to inflation will also be withdrawn, so pensions for people retiring any time except very soon will be vastly diminished and before long almost worthless.

Despite imposing the changes, harsher than anything proposed by the meanest multinational, CUP asked staff for what it laughably calls their "consent" – subject to one threatening condition from managing director Michael Holdsworth: "If you do not consent, your basic salary will not be increased after 1 October 2006." No more pay rises, no matter how rampant inflation. And no answers, either: CUP didn't return the *Eye's* call to discuss the issue.

Happily, not everyone at CUP is suffering. Directors, including chief executive Stephen Bourne, escape the pension cuts. The deeds of their separate scheme prevent such changes, so they will just have to keep their generous deals.

Staff meanwhile are putting together a complaint to the pensions regulator as they believe that forcing through the changes without consultation is illegal. If it isn't, there's a Maxwell-sized hole in pensions law.

Marcel Marceau's autobiography

■ ONE of the dafter business decisions made at Waterstone's has at last been reversed.

When the company started its online business, it outsourced the running of it to Amazon. While it may have made sense in some ways to enlist the company that knew the most about online bookselling, in other ways, it was like Montgomery outsourcing to Rommel.

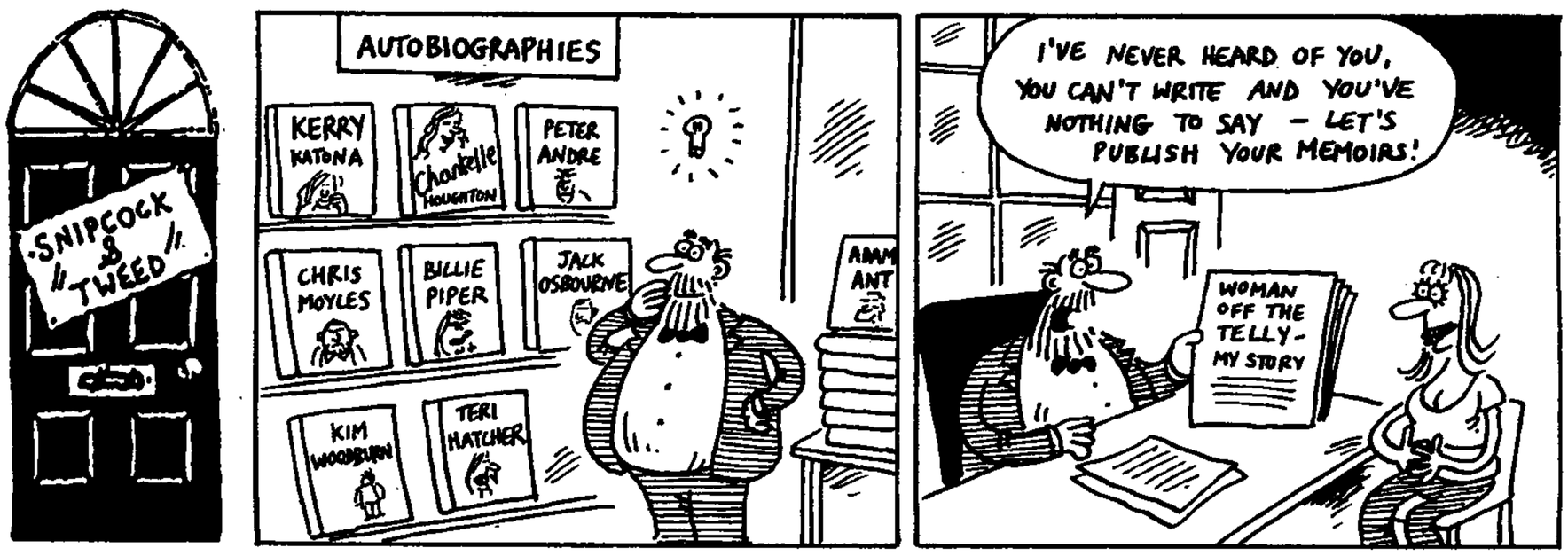
Now, Waterstone's is running its own online shop for the first time. By coincidence, the move comes just as Alan "the Weasel" Giles – one of the architects of the original folly – finally makes his exit from HMV, the parent company of Waterstone's. Gamely, he has declared himself open to approaches from publishers, but it's unlikely his parting shot about the "inherent conservativeness" of the trade will have done him any favours.

■ THE poetry world's peerless capacity for getting itself in a pickle was splendidly demonstrated by last week's Forward Prize ceremony.

Clearly anxious to avoid repeating the 2002 brouhaha (when the late Michael Donaghy resigned from chairing the judging panel after bias claims), head judge John Burnside farcically "stood aside" when the main Best Collection prize was being judged because in a typical instance of incest Robin Robertson, one of a shortlist also including Seamus Heaney, is his editor at Cape.

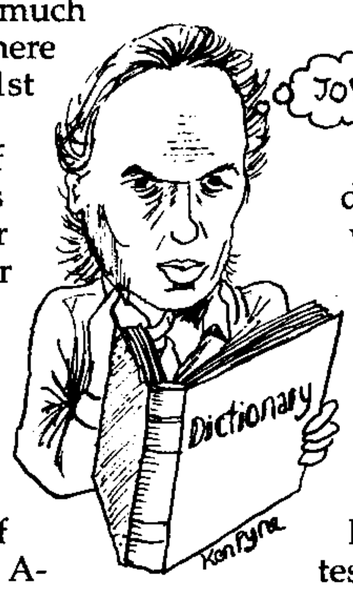
And the £10,000 went to... Robin Robertson! As any poetry shortlist is likely to include Cape and Picador contenders, the obvious solution is to ban those publishers' authors from judging panels – but poets are unshakably wedded to giving their pals cheques.

'Bookworm'



Mart and his critics

SEVENTH decade looming before you, disdainful juniors crowding your space in the pool like so many piranha fish, gossip-columnists in rapt pursuit of your every sneeze – no, it can't be much fun being Martin Amis, here in the bright, brutish 21st century.



The rawest part of the deal, you imagine, is the sight of the peer group disappearing over the pale horizon. Julian, Ian – all the nervous kids Mart had the edge on when they were forging their careers three decades back – sell in their hundreds of thousands now *and* get A-grade reviews. Mart here, he just sits and frets, aims and blames, with the bestseller list as remote and inconceivable a prospect as his old dad coming out for nuclear disarmament.

And then there are the reviewers, the cold-eyed, ever-baleful reviewers. What *is* it, as Mart might say, in those dangerously imitable tones of his, about the reviewers? After all, if Mart has problems writing his darling books – the slim, Gulag-era novella that is *House of Meetings* (Cape, £15.99) took all of three years – then messieurs and mesdames the critics have even more trouble in criticising them. Everybody, not to put too fine a point on it, is carrying baggage with them into the booth.

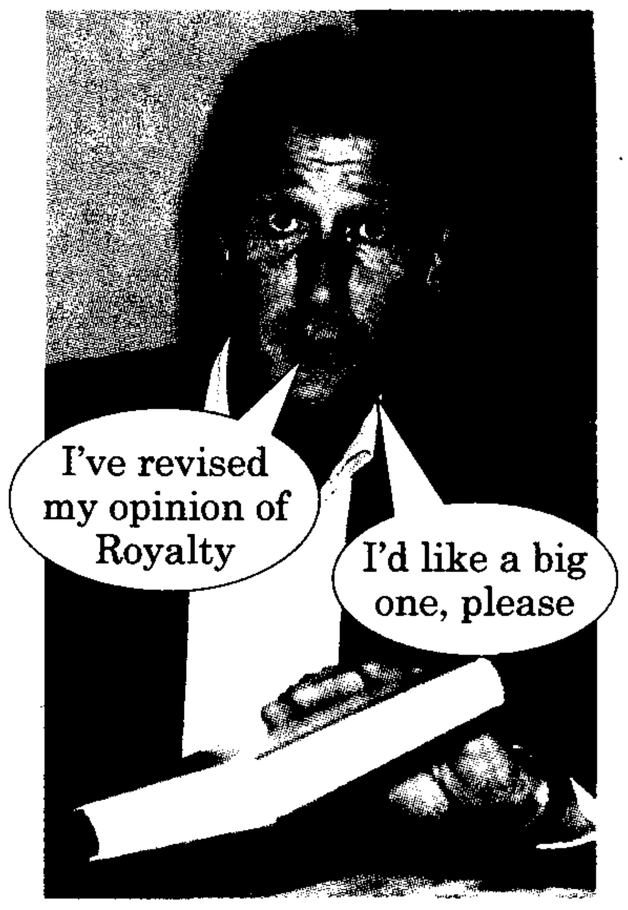
Oldsters remember his glory days as a '70s Turk. The fortysomething generation grew up on *Money* (1984) and have spent the past 20 years regretting his mid-life slide. The kids, eyeing up the somewhat ponderous spectacle of Mart performing – the core subject of *all* Mart's books, incidentally – can't see what all the fuss is about, no sir. All this produces a bewildering variety of responses which, as so often in the world of light literature, tells you less about the work under review than the sensitivities and neuroses of the people bidden to appraise it.

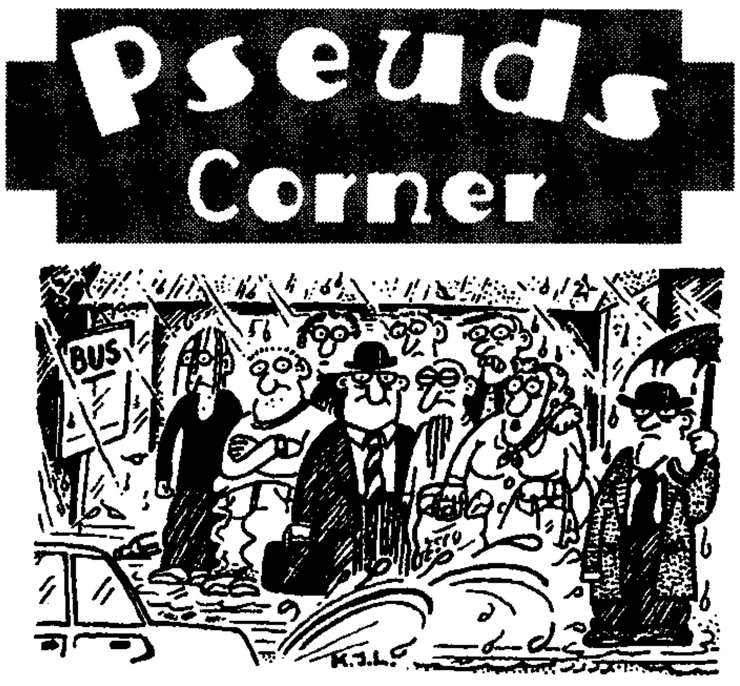
By far the funniest, it had to be said, came courtesy of the *Observer*. Mart was a "special writer" there for yonks, his old mate Robert McCrum is literary editor still, and it suits the paper to pretend that the last decade and a half hasn't happened (Amis is still "one of the world's greatest writers"). It still sends moist-eyed lady reporters off to Long Island to interview him and so on. Even Rachel Cooke's admiring despatch, however, couldn't quite disguise the public property angle that attends all Mart coverage. Mart, you see, has been popped at and satirised and pastiched so often that there is a way in which everything he writes – even this very serious take on the Soviet labour camps – seems stale before it hits the table. As Tim Martin amusingly put it in the *Independent on Sunday*, you could almost see Mart, stooped over the lap-top, trying to think of another smart epithet for another horrible thing: "Sometimes, indeed, it appears that the author has wholly abdicated in favour of Craig Brown."

Another way into Amis, inevitably, is the playing of the "interesting failure" card. This line has Mart "mistaking the failure of his own talent", don't you know, not realising that his strong point is grotesquerie or searing world reportage, but going for existential clamour. "His Dickensian comic note is his strongest suit – gravitas or moral clairvoyancy his shortest", Sam Leith pronounced in the *Literary Review*. "But Amis still fails more interestingly than most of his peers succeed." (Mr Leith conducted a public interview with Mart last week, so you hope it went off all right.) Douglas Kennedy in *The Times* finished on almost exactly the same note. Lacked visceral punch, he thought, but a reminder "that Amis is always, at the very least, an interesting writer".

Elsewhere a fair amount of guilt for past excesses was being quietly expiated. Tibor Fischer, the man who famously compared *Yellow Dog* (2003) to the sight of one's uncle masturbating, could now be found in the *Sunday Telegraph* declaring that "the English language bows deeper to Amis than anyone else". Happily, ancient prejudices soon reasserted themselves: it was "a pity that someone with Amis's firepower can't deliver a better product". You get the point? Tibor, like practically everyone else on display here, is not so much reviewing the book as his own relationship with the author.

Several critics had words to say about the "authenticity" of Mart's take on a situation he had never experienced and a country where he had never been. But nothing could be less authentic than the way he now gets reviewed: a series of notices in which the critic's eye is trained over his shoulder, on his bookcase, at the dim, personal past – anywhere other than the book before him.





Place and the experience of BLISS
Theme: Interactions in the wild
Darren J. Reed and Peter Wright
University of York

This paper builds on earlier work that understands the design of bus information panels as rooted in a landscape of human experience. It turns the mundane activity of waiting at a bus stop into a problematic space of emotion and volition by understanding the dialogic relationship between human and technology...By imagining a series of conversation-like dialogues, based in a Conversation Analytic (CA) sensitivity to the achievement of meaning in sequence [Condor and Antaki, 1997] it generates a series of experience narratives that provide for a critical analysis of the information presentation. It uses this to engage with the idea of place as a layered feature of the bus stop.

Paper given at the Human Computer Interaction conference, London, September 2006

Recently, and for the first time in my life, I abandoned, not a dead thing, but a thriving novella; and I did so for reasons that were wholly extraneous. I am aware that this is hardly a tectonic event; but for me the episode was existential. In the West, writers are acclimatised to freedom – to limitless and gluttonous freedom. And I discovered something. Writing is freedom; and as soon as that freedom is in shadow, the writer can no longer proceed. The shadow, in the case, was not a fear of repercussion. It was as if, most reluctantly, I was receiving a new vibration or frequency from the planetary shimmer. The novella was a satire called The Unknown Known.

MARTIN AMIS,
Observer

Alaistair MacLennan THYME MITE
Penlee Park, Penzance 10.00 to 19.00

This 9 hour performance will see the artist confined within a greenhouse with 18 fish skeletons and a wooden chair, slowly filling the greenhouse with new elements. "... concerns include ethics, aesthetics, religious/political bigotry, inclusive tolerance, oppositional or consensus means of political/social improvement, death, decay, new life and mutation, transformation."

From the Newlyn Art Gallery catalogue

Cinema has been one of my greatest passions since childhood. I loved Alfred Hitchcock's Notorious so much that it influenced me in the design of my own bathroom.

GIORGIO ARMANI, *Guardian*

I came across a burnt-out motorcycle in the street this morning, no wheels, no seat, just a charred metal skeleton. It had obviously been stolen and dumped by a gang of teenage wild boys. It was the most beautiful thing I've seen since last night's evening sky.

Primal Scream's BOBBY GILLESPIE, *Observer*

A friend of mind is getting divorced. It has transformed her into a condition where she has never been more beautiful. All illusions have fallen from her to the extent that an evening in her company is akin to taking cocktails with the Cumaean Siybl... The effect is far more breathtaking than bridal transfigurations, their faces stunned as newborns. From being the classic, Wildean sphinx without a secret, she has re-emerged as a knowing, rounded individual, rhomboid with edge and depth...

Isn't it about time we acknowledged the phenomenon [divorce] as the contemporary rite of passage, indeed fashion statement that it is? When Cher, that great harbinger of Zeitgeist shift, announced a few years ago that marriage was a "five or ten-year thing" people were aghast. Today, even with divorce rates slightly slipping in 2005, a decade is the banal average. Separation has ceased to be controversial and is now merely marriage's natural consequence, yin to wedlock's yang.

Moreover, it imparts a chic, been-around-the-block sense of oneself as artfully distressed goods; a sleek, Hitchock-blonde state of being. Edith Wharton anticipated this when she made her divorcees modish agents of social change, imbued with a beguiling postlapsarian allure [continues in this vein for some time]

HANNAH BETTS,
Times Magazine

CONTRIBUTORS: James Wormell, Alice Gaskell, Barry McGuinness, M. Gardin, Dave Taylor, A. Lyons.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING

Not a legacy to stand on

THE Office of National Statistics has finally pronounced on the effect of including some PFI deals, those that are "on balance sheet", in government borrowing figures after they were incorrectly excluded for years.

To much relief at the Treasury, only 0.4 percent has been added to government debt as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP), not threatening Gordon Brown's sustainable investment rule (which says it mustn't go over 40 percent, compared to the 36.7 percent at present). As this is probably the last statistical word on the subject before he moves next door, that's his economic legacy safe.

A closer inspection of Treasury figures, however, shows just what a ride Brown is taking tomorrow's taxpayers for. PFI commitments hidden *off* the books by virtue of Treasury accountancy rules written under the beady eye of the chancellor's hand-picked PFI Taskforce in 1998 and 1999 (the contrivance of which is exposed by the continuing existence of an accounting black hole in which deals are off both the public *and* private sector balance sheets) now run into the hundreds of billions. Not only would these deals have soon taken the chancellor over his limit if they hadn't been kept off the books by accountancy tricks, but they will set the taxpayer back hundreds of billions of pounds – all conveniently absent from any measure of what's going on in the economy. Payments under all PFI deals signed by March 2005 are officially estimated to be £148bn at today's prices. Add the payments that will emerge from the glut of contracts signed and promised since then, and the total will be nearer the quarter-trillion pound mark (roughly a couple of years' income tax receipts). And that's just what they are estimated to cost now. Experience (and several *Eye* stories) show the costs always escalate and often multiply under 25-year contracts drawn up by the PFI companies and their consultants.

These mind-boggling amounts will have first call on future budgets – ahead of teachers', nurses' and soldiers' wages, for example – for decades. That's the true, if hard to comprehend, burden that PFI places on future taxpayers – but which is presented to the public as a mere 0.4 percent addition to an arcane economic statistic. And all to satisfy a chancellor who was desperate to stay within an arbitrary borrowing limit to protect his own position.

TAX CREDITS

A Gordian Brown knot

DESPITE ministers' claims to the contrary, the fiasco that is Gordon Brown's tax credits system is continuing to cause misery to many of those it was supposed to help.

Such is the distress caused to one young family by a barrage of differing claims of overpayment and inaccurate statements, that they are even considering trying to raise £2,000 they do not believe they owe just to get Revenue & Customs off their backs.

On one occasion Londoners Robert Branston and his partner Wanda Hawran received no fewer than five different award notices each, all dated 18 August.

Things started to go wrong for the couple when Robert gave up his job to start a business specialising in organizing social events in London. He duly informed HMRC that he was no longer earning.

At first the couple suffered a 10-month denial that their son, Ben, existed. Once the couple convinced the Revenue that he did exist, HMRC couldn't then get the toddler's date of birth right. Thus they were being credited for a period *before* Ben was born – but then the family income was wrong.

Each time the couple rang or wrote to HMRC they were assured that matters would be sorted out. They were once even awarded a £40 goodwill payment. However, even the decision to close their account and open a fresh one to try to resolve the problems compounded them instead. The family is now receiving more nonsensical statements than before.

Nor has the involvement of Walthamstow MP Neil Gerrard helped. Despite their MP's best efforts, the family have suddenly been told that thanks to a change in their circumstances (there has been none), they no longer qualify for tax credits at all. Meanwhile, inaccurate statements and demands keep arriving. The last four envelopes (two each) dropped through the door last Thursday.

A spokesman for the HMRC said: "We are sorry to learn of the difficulties experienced by this couple. Due to taxpayer confidentiality we are unable to discuss individual cases, but the details have been passed to our tax credits office." Oh no – not again!

ASYLUM SEEKING

To hell and back

AS the *Eye* went to press campaigners from the church and various charities were making an 11th-hour attempt to halt the deportation of a 24-year-old Congolese woman and her two children, taken from their home in Glasgow in a dawn raid by immigration officials.

Around 10 officials burst into the home of Caritas Sony, handcuffed her and separated her from her distressed children, a two-year-old toddler and four-month old baby. All three were then taken to Dungavel detention centre in Lanarkshire (pictured above).

The raid was one of the latest in a series which church and charity campaigners say are inhumane – and which after a series of protests and candlelit vigils, government ministers in Scotland had pledged to stop.

Caritas, who arrived in Glasgow in February 2004, came to seek asylum in the UK from the DR Congo telling an horrific account of rape and torture.

Her father, a politician, disappeared in 2001 and his body has never been found. Her family were then arrested, and her mother was executed in front of her. Her brother was ordered to rape her, refused and was himself executed in January 2004. Caritas herself was repeatedly raped and tortured – her two year old son is the child of one of the men who raped her, she says.

With help Caritas managed to escape from prison and eventually come to the United Kingdom to seek asylum. When her family was arrested, Caritas's 19-year-old sister had been put in a different cell. In summer 2005 Caritas received a death certificate for her sister.

Robina Qureshi, director of Positive Action in Housing, one of the charities that has taken up Caritas's case, said: "I have no doubt that her story is true. She had some documentation to support it and lawyers are now trying to get her freed from detention pending a proper look at her case for asylum."

Unfortunately, says Qureshi, changes in the law mean that overstretched asylum lawyers are now only funded to do five hours' work on each asylum seeker's case. This, she believes, results in many genuine asylum seekers failing to receive proper representation and access to justice.

"Many reporting to us are lucky if they get more than a few minutes of legal support with proper interpreting support throughout their entire asylum claim. We question how the traumatic experiences of those fleeing... can even be sensitively recorded within five hours, never mind be recorded, translated into legal motions and represented in court."

Conditions in Dungavel have been heavily criticised and Caritas was said not to have been able to get enough warm clothing or the correct formula feed for her baby. She was due to be sent to Yarl's Wood in Bedfordshire, which became the main UK detention centre after Dungavel was condemned. But last week Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons, also criticised healthcare in Yarl's Wood and made 48 recommendations for improvement. For now, the family is in a hostel.

E-GOVERNMENT

PAYE through the nose

THE chancellor has found a sure-fire way to get people as interested in electronic government as the zealots in Whitehall and their consultants: bribe them.

Back in 2001 Gordon Brown asked Sir Patrick Carter to look at simplifying payroll management for small employers. Carter recommended getting them to submit their annual PAYE returns electronically, to achieve which he suggested incentive payments – though these would, he stressed, require "detailed planning".

Carter helpfully provided some back-of-an-envelope calculations of what the incentives would cost, assuming a 10 percent take-up in the first year, then 20 percent and so on. Over five years the cost would be around £290m, against which admin savings of £105m would be made.

Three years later Carter's recommendation was implemented to the letter. But the incentives proved a bit more popular than expected. In the first year, 2004/05, around 900,000 small employers, about seven times the expected number, decided not to look this gift horse in the mouth and claimed the £250 bribe. More than 1.1m took advantage for 2005/06, bringing the cost so far to around half a billion pounds. With a further £325 on offer, the total bill could be not far off the billion pound mark – or three times the planned cost. Amazingly the National Audit Office, in its 2005/06 report on HMRC, noted the higher than expected payments for 2004/05 but didn't raise an eyebrow.

Encouraging small firms to file online is probably helpful, but is it worth forking out the annual cost of the Iraq war to achieve it?

MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE

Loopy loopholes?

BEFORE Home Secretary John Reid closes the legal "loopholes" that he claims allow villains to be freed on a "technicality", he should examine the case of Oliver Campbell.

Mr Campbell's murder conviction in 1990 bore all the hallmarks of the worst miscarriages of justice of the 1970s and 1980s. Like the notorious case of Stefan Kiszko, Mr Campbell was also a mentally impaired man who was jailed for life for a murder he could never have committed. Yet because of a series of technicalities, his lawyers have still been unable to clear his name – and now they have reached the end of the legal line.

The court of appeal, the Criminal Cases Review Commission and a judicial review have all failed an unfortunate man who suffered a brain injury as a baby, was brought up in care – and who has never done anything more criminal than once vandalising a telephone box. Yet in 1990 he was found guilty and sentenced to life for shooting dead at point blank range an Asian shopkeeper, Baldev Hoondle, during an armed robbery by two men in north London. Mr Campbell's baseball cap had been found in a street a short distance from the shop; and his co-accused and friend Eric Samuels was jailed for being an accomplice.

Oliver Campbell is distinctive looking: of big build and 6ft 3ins tall. Eyewitnesses to the shooting, including Mr Hoondle's son, said both the robbers were about 5ft 10ins tall and none of the witnesses picked Oliver out of an identity parade. One of them, an Australian passer-by, changed his mind after talking to a detective and after the parade had finished later identified the man at number 9 – where Oliver had been.

Fingerprints on the shop door, the counter and crucially a beer can bought by the gunman did not match Oliver's. Nor did two hairs found in a baseball cap which Mr Campbell admitted had once been his.

So how was Oliver Campbell convicted?

Mr Campbell is extremely suggestible. His low IQ makes it very difficult for him to understand anything other than simple questions – and, crucially, he is more likely to answer more complicated questions in the affirmative. Nevertheless, nearly all the rules governing police interviews with those with mental disability who may be susceptible to pressure were broken. He was initially interviewed without either a solicitor or competent adult accompanying him; the case was discussed with him by officers in circumstances where they could not and did not take contemporaneous notes; and there were discrepancies in custody records.

His "confession" came just half an hour after his then solicitor left the police station. Despite the solicitor's instructions that he should be called if Mr Campbell was to be questioned again, police ignored the instruction and persuaded Oliver's former foster mother to sit in. But even that confession was riddled with inconsistencies which did not fit the facts of the crime.

If all this was not enough to raise questions about the case, something else known to the trial judge, police and prosecutors should have done. Oliver's co-accused, who admitted taking part in the robbery, had told police that Oliver was *not* the man who pulled the trigger. He couldn't have been. He was not even there.

The co-defendant, Samuels, gave the police the name "Harvey" and described how he and Oliver had been with Harvey in Leicester Square earlier that night. He said Harvey had stolen Oliver's cap from his head and said he wanted to go to look for a shop to rob. While Samuels was up for it, Oliver wanted no part of any crime and had gone off. Samuels described what happened and running away from the scene, explaining why Oliver's hat was found in the same street as the shop. His account fitted the facts, but Samuels then refused to sign a statement.

The police officer was not allowed to tell the court about Samuels' revelations because it was ruled hearsay – and while it was believed that Samuels could and would be cross-examined about it, Samuels declined to go into the witness box. Thus it was kept from the jury.

After Oliver's first appeal failed in 1994, BBC's *Rough Justice* programme spent nine months investigating the case. Among other things, it came up with two crucial new pieces of evidence. The programme makers tracked down and filmed Samuels (then freed from jail) who repeated his account of Oliver's innocence.

A ballistics expert also demonstrated that the gunman must have been right handed. Testing showed that while Oliver was born right-handed, the brain trauma he suffered as a baby had affected the use of his right hand and he now favoured his left for most tasks.

With this and detailed evidence from leading forensic psychologists explaining why and how the highly suggestible Oliver Campbell came to make his confession, his new lawyers submitted a huge dossier to the CCRC. They highlighted the nonsensical elements of the confession – how Oliver said he dropped his hat in the shop; how he claimed bizarrely to have been carrying the gun tied up in string attached under his arm; and how he said he had practised shooting in a field or forest, but he had no idea where.

When asked how many bullets he had for practice he said: "One or two." The minute the officer questioned the number he said: "Ok, perhaps a dozen."

But instead of looking at the evidence in its devastating entirety, the CCRC appears to have second guessed the court of appeal at every step, using one bit of dodgy evidence to support another – including Oliver Campbell's so-called confessions.

Thus as Samuels has refused to give the commission an account of what happened, it says his evidence exonerating Oliver to the police and on camera cannot be tested by cross-examination and can't be relied on. It would be "unfair to the Crown".

The commission said the fact that Oliver is to all intents and purposes left handed and unlikely to use his right hand was inconclusive. And despite the two psychologists' explanation of Oliver's "acquiescence", the CCRC chose to prefer parts of the evidence of one of them which did not completely render the confession unsafe. Moreover, because the forensic samples of hair and finger prints were not good enough quality to identify anyone else on the crime data-base, the commission chose to ignore the fact that they were not Oliver's.

Oliver's lawyers had argued that a recent change in the law would now enable the court of appeal to act on the statements Samuels had made exonerating Oliver. One might have thought this point alone should have prompted to refer the case back to the appeal court. Instead it chose to interpret the law itself and reject the entire application.

Oliver has now been freed from jail but remains a convicted murderer on a life licence. His solicitor told the Eye: "Oliver is simply incapable of the crime. I have never ever been more convinced of someone's innocence, or had a stronger case to take to the appeal court. But we are blocked. The justice system maintains he is guilty."

DEFENCE TRAINING PFI

War of words

PREPARATION for the Iraq and Afghanistan ventures might not have been up to much, but nothing is being left to chance on the Ministry of Defence's latest campaign: the public relations offensive to sell the forthcoming privatisation of defence training under a £19bn PFI contract.

Although only the *Eye* and the local press in areas affected have so far raised any questions over flogging off training on everything from driving tanks to military policing, news of who will be given this work is expected to spark some debate when the "preferred bidders" are announced shortly.

Not only is their suitability to train the armed forces likely to be questioned, but there are also serious security concerns over handing such sensitive tasks and information to private firms – especially as the alleged cost-efficiency of the scheme arises because the companies will also make money from providing training to unspecified "3rd parties".

An MoD memo to press officers seen by the *Eye*, titled "Communication outputs surrounding preferred bidder announcement", shows PR preparations are on a par with D-Day. "Pre-preferred bidder" there will be "articles for journals; posters and PR material". That's just a taster, though. Once the announcement is made there will be "tailored letters to all MPs affected"; a "tailored letter to trade unions" and "tailored letters to SoS Wales/1st minister". These will be followed by numerous pre-prepared statements, press conferences and Q& A briefings, including one for Prime Minister's Question Time. The "post-preferred bidder" stage will see more promotional literature, displays, roadshows (for which there will be special "backdrops/staging") and speeches. Corporate puffery will be pushed at public expense too, as the task described as "bidders PR material to distribute" will also be undertaken by MoD officials.

The defence training review was launched in 1999 by the then Defence Secretary George Robertson, now cashing in on his experience in various boardrooms. Six years on, companies with a less than impressive record on public contracts – including EDS, BAe, BT, Carillion and Serco – stand to gain billions on some of the most sensitive work going. That certainly demands a little spin.

AVIVA

Sack race

FEW companies have jumped on to the "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) bandwagon more enthusiastically than Norwich Union owner Aviva.

Prominent in its impressive 28-page CSR report is the Aviva "global people strategy", which includes a laudable commitment to "foster morale in times of radical change". Aviva's most recent morale-boosting move has been to announce 4,000 job cuts at Norwich Union to allow for further "offshoring" to India and £250m a year savings. An estimated 2,000 of the cuts will be made through compulsory redundancies.

Not that Aviva needs the money or to slash the jobs – it's in rude health. It recently announced six-monthly profits up 27 percent to £1.7bn. Even the Norwich Union reported vastly higher returns.

In contrast to Aviva's low key announcement of the "headcount reductions", the company made much more noise about signing up to the Oxfam 365 disaster relief initiative, to which it will donate less than £1m over three years. "For Aviva the Oxfam 365 Alliance is a perfect demonstration of 'forward thinking' in practice and we are proud to be a part of it," said CSR director Anthony Sampson. The same could be said of sacking 2,000 people when you don't need to... but "socially responsible" Aviva doesn't seem quite so proud of that.

You can contact the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

NORTH Korea's nuclear weapon test may not be the ideal marketing boost for the Chosun Development & Investment Fund which is seeking to raise up to $100m from investors unperturbed by such little matters as dictatorship, police state, collapsing economy or US classification among the axis of evil. Well, you can't have everything!

The man behind Chosun – which is what Kim calls North Korea – is Londoner Colin McAskill, a former marine engineer turned banker who has been doing business with the regime of the Great Helmsman Kim Il Sung and his son Kim Jong Il since 1978.

McAskill and his company, Anglo-Sino Capital Partners, were authorized by the Fundamentally Supine Authority in May and so able to solicit investors for the Chosun Fund, which is a UK limited partnership. The initial aim was to raise $50m but that was soon doubled after the FSA gave its approval to McAskill and Anglo-Sino.

Anglo-Sino features a number of individuals with City backgrounds, as well as a former American diplomat who has experience of negotiating with the world's most reclusive and isolated regime. But the principal is clearly McAskill.

The 67 year old, who lives in a flat in Kensington, claims there is gold and much more in natural resources besides in them thar North Korean hills and rivers. Gold there certainly is as North Korea shipped it to London until 1994. The aim is to invest in those sectors of the local economy – those that still exist, that is – which are export orientated.

The Chosun promise is a "significant return" in the near future and "considerably enhanced returns after the resolution of the current nuclear issue". Well, that may be a little delayed after Monday's test explosion.

Given that North Korea's population needs humanitarian aid to stay above starvation level – aid that may now be reduced - not to mention the basket case nature of an economy which, according to the US, is engaged in smuggling drugs, arms and counterfeit goods, the exact economic development possibilities may not be immediately obvious to investors.

Today North Korea's trade is mainly with China. But its economy has shrunk by a third since 1989.

The Americans stepped up their financial sanctions last year by freezing North Korean bank accounts held in Macao by the locally-owned Delta Asia bank. Vietnam stopped banking with North Korea this year under US pressure. Only Russia would seem to be open for Kim's banking business. This pressure is said to have played a key role in making North Korea walk away from the six-party talks about its nuclear ambitions. The US aim was already to choke off North Korea placing the country in "near complete isolation" financially.

Not that the US moves have discouraged McAskill. In September, four months after launching the Chosun Fund, he disclosed that his Hong Kong company Koryo Asia had bought a North Korean bank – the Daedong Credit Bank – which had funds frozen in Macao. Daedong has some $6m of its $10m frozen at Delta Asia. A large chunk of that change belongs to British American Tobacco, which has a cigarette factory in North Korea.

Koryo Asia is the investment adviser to the Chosun Fund. It also owns half the shares in Anglo-Sino Capital.

As the US was determined to cut off North Korea's access to the world's financial markets before the nuclear test, it is hard to see what openings will be left now. There are certain to be demands for tougher financial sanctions and maybe a return to banning all dealings with Pyongyang other than for humanitarian reasons.

All of which raises some interesting questions about what the FSA was doing licensing McAskill and Anglo-Sino to sell their Chosun Fund in the first place. Chosun is an unregulated collective investment scheme available to supposed sophisticated or institutional investors. So that's all right then!

The decision is also puzzling perhaps in view of some aspects of McAskill's own business history.

McAskill burst upon the North Korean scene in the late 1980s as an unofficial representative of the Pyongyang government in its debt negotiations. North Korea defaulted in 1976 and now owes an estimated $1.6bn it cannot pay to the London Club of foreign banks, mainly British, Australian and French.

In 1987 North Korea was declared in default on some £470m owed to two banking syndicates headed by Morgan Grenfell and Australia & New Zealand Banking. McAskill appeared then as an intermediary for Pyongyang and fronted a proposed settlement involving a new loan. This fell through the following year. McAskill was described by one banker as "an unguided missile".

The default triggered the threat of asset seizures by the banks. As a result North Korea stopped selling gold through London. It had been exporting two tons a month.

McAskill describes himself as having first come into contact with North Korea through companies he owned and managed after leaving the Royal Navy. This is believed to be a reference to the Tropimere hovercraft business in Cumbria, which he ran in the early 1980s.

Tropimere was said to have planned to supply two hovercrafts to North Korea. These, it seems, were not delivered. It also obtained a contract to supply two hovercraft to Saudi Arabia. These were – but not to the Saudis' entire satisfaction. However, the company ultimately failed. It was wound up in 1986.

McAskill's next venture was in publishing. FirstLink Media Insight was set up to publish newsletters and periodicals. It was compulsorily wound up in 1997 on a petition from Westminster council. Another McAskill company, Guildhall Enterprises, was struck off in 1998.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s McAskill was often said by friends who loaned him money to have had financial difficulties and to have always explained that there was a big deal with North Korea just around the corner.

That would seem now to be the Chosun Fund, although just how much of the projected $100m has so far been attracted is unclear. McAskill has described the interest as "spectacular" and "quite phenomenal". But insiders refuse to say how much if any money has been received. However much it was, it is unlikely to increase now that the Kim bomb has finally gone off. Especially if the other Dear Leader decides it might look a little inconsistent to be supporting economic sanctions on North Korea while allowing a London-based fund to raise money to invest there.

NEWLY-knighted "Sir" Philip Green – already nursing a badly bruised ego from having to report a fall in sales and 60 percent collapse in profits at his Bhs store chain – was not amused to learn last Friday that the stores had been voted least popular by *Daily Torygraph* readers.

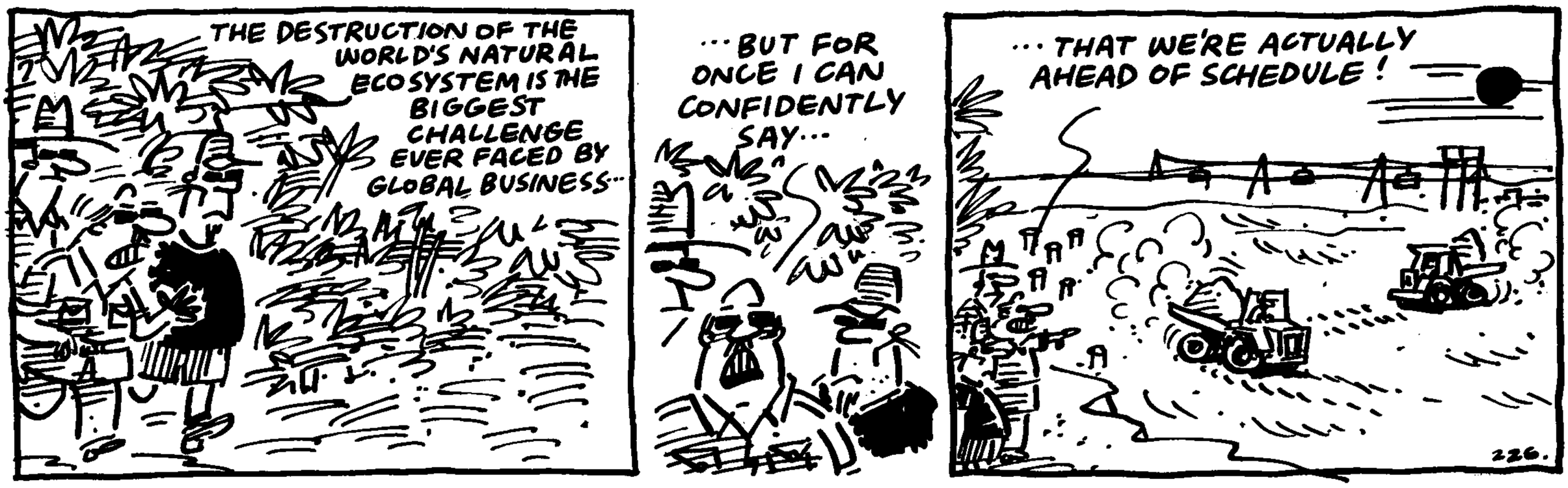
The poll had been organized by the paper's consumer affairs editor David Derbyshire. When told of the outcome Green expressed surprise at the call and suggested the unflattering result would not be published. "Check with the editor," he is said to have been taped as saying. Green need not have worried. The result of the clearly flawed poll did not appear – despite having appeared on the initial Saturday newslist.

No doubt it is coincidental that the *Torygraph* is owned by Sir David Tweedledum and Sir Frederick Tweedledee, who just happened to have partnered Green in his original, highly profitable purchase of Sears in 1999, which helped finance the subsequent acquisition in 2000 of Bhs. Or that the great retailer is also close to exciting new editor Will Lewis and senior City columnist Jeff Randall.

ANOTHER example of fearless *Torygraph* reporting – the campaign to stop the NatWest

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG


THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WORLD'S NATURAL ECOSYSTEM IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE EVER FACED BY GLOBAL BUSINESS...
...BUT FOR ONCE I CAN CONFIDENTLY SAY...
...THAT WE'RE ACTUALLY AHEAD OF SCHEDULE!
226.

Three being extradited to face hell on earth in the US courts and prisons – has proved equally ill-informed.

Far from finding themselves at the mercy of drug dealers, murderers and rapists, David Bermingham, Giles Darby and Gary Mulgrew have yet to spend a day in prison. Furthermore, a federal judge in Houston last month ruled that their electronic tags could be removed and some of their restrictions on local travel could be eased. The severest penalties – other than the reasonable one of not leaving the US so as to prevent another elongated extradition process – are that they are restricted as to where they can travel inside the US and cannot socialize together without their lawyers being present. Tough eh?

The trial is due to take place in September 2007 although the prosecution has stated that it will be ready to go in February if the defence is. So much for years of imprisonment while awaiting trial predicted by the *Torygraph* and the NatWest Three PR machine.

A KEY witness against the NatWest Three will be former Enron chief financial officer Andrew Fastow. He was recently jailed for six years – a big discount on the ten years he had agreed with prosecutors before giving evidence against his bosses, Ken Lay (RIP) and Jeff Skilling, due to be sentenced later this month. So impressed were the Feds with Fastow's testimony and its contribution to nailing Lay and Skilling that they did not ask the sentencing judge to enforce the agreed 10-year term.

Prosecutor John Hueston told the judge that Fastow's evidence had been "critical" and without it the successful case against Lay and Skilling would have been "in doubt". He later stated that the prosecution case had been "weak" without Fastow who, he said, "allowed the US government to bring jurors inside the executive suite". A better case for plea bargains it would be hard to present. An example the Attorney-General Lord Goldsmith should quote when pressing to give the Serious Farce Office similar powers against the opposition of judges and defence lawyers.

THE day of reckoning for investors in online gaming stocks finally arrived last week – ironically on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. Some £4bn was wiped off stock market values by news of the surprise weekend passing of a bill by the US Senate making poker and the other online games illegal.

All that now awaits is for President Bush to sign the bill into law. This follows the arrests in the US of British executives from first Betonsports and then Sportingbet. All of this is a death well foretold (such as in *Eye* 1141 a year ago – see below), flagged in the prospectuses for online gaming companies and ignored by investors. But not by online gaming company directors, especially at PartyGaming, who have sold shares together worth £1.3bn.

Such a risk-averse policy was smart. It would only take the arrest of one online gaming executive by the American authorities – who say it is illegal under US law – or the similarly encouraged ban on US credit card companies facilitating payments by players, and the boom would be another dot-com bust.

The online casino business depends for most of its revenues and growth on the US. Those running the online casino businesses most certainly are not gamblers so it is a good idea to hedge their bets against bad news by cashing in as much as possible now.

Slicker, Private Eye 1141 (16/9/05)

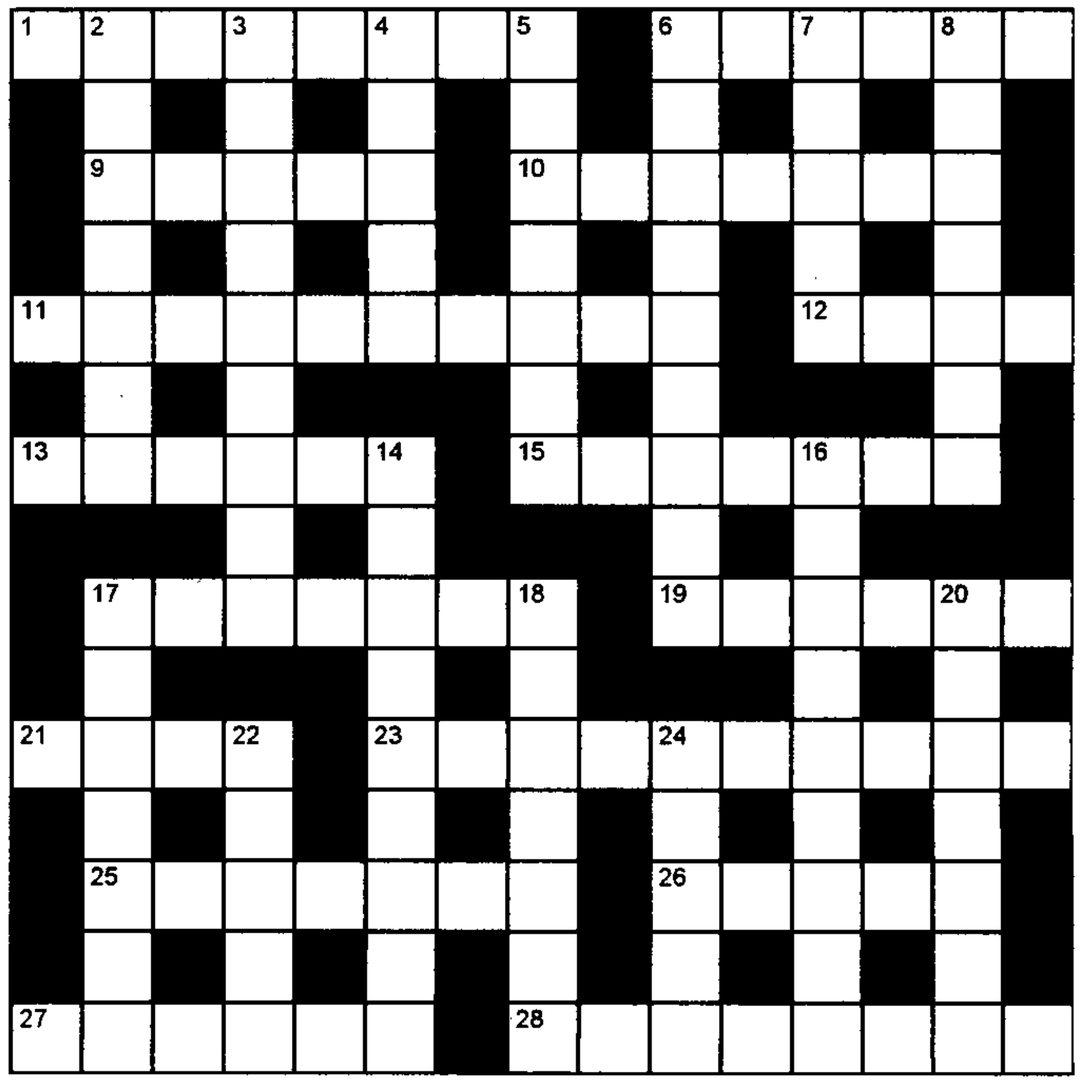
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 324

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 20 October 2006

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1 Play with a babe having revealing holes, dress-wise (8)
6 Sagging pop group ditching one of its members in hurry (6)
9 Male mating with female, outwardly shrinking and relaxing (5)
10 Putting dole distribution before employment is to be nit-picking (7)
11/8 Done over by a newspaper, Uri is beyond organisational capabilities of the Home Office, say (1,4-2,2,1,7)
12/24 Named thus, dirty foreigners vis-à-vis *Daily Mail* readers? (4,3,2)
13 Stuck in jail in US and subjected to piss-taking (4,2)
15 Penis partly blue? Yes, with hard swellings (7)
17 Arse getting end away on table is hardly a romantic (7)
19 Pussy after pussy? (6)
21 Thought Cyclops had taken to drink? No time! (4)
23 Relentless competition from definitive nation of arseholes (3,3,4)
25 "Rubbish act" label not welcomed by a luvvie (7)
26 Put out when gonorrhoea goes round university (5)
27 Spread legs initially, displaying bloomers (6)
28 Support found on one you're hoping to shag? Put off for a future day (8)

DOWN

2 Jailbreaker's case dismissed – on the piss (7)
3 It shows the different positions of Amtrak (USA) (4,5)
4 New Orleans flood location? Bush administration heads demanded by *Eye* readers (5)
5 Decrepit station leads to a real bad force (3,4)
6 Trip abroad – piss yourself laughing (4,5)
7 Pornographic, dual controlled model? (5)
8 See 11ac.
14 A right messy game of soldiers when trouser squeezes one testicle (9)
16 Idle arse drinks enough for the whole group (3,6)
17 Conservative ... not, as teenager might put it, rotten liar and cad (7)
18 Lech indiscriminately, knock around and you might get this (3,4)
20 Wrinkly Caine's crumpled body for preservation (7)
22 Player Bill has reversed balls (5)
24 See 12ac.

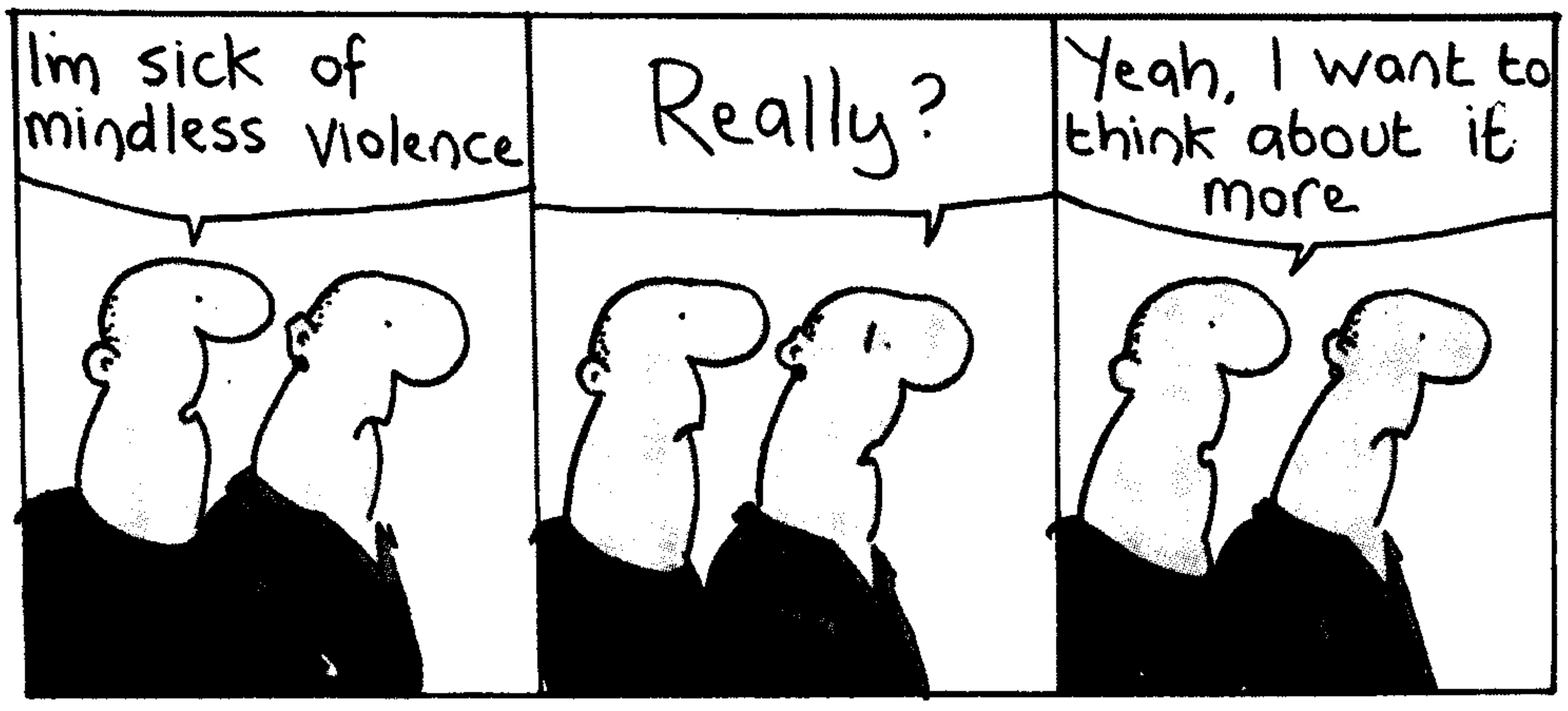
Crossword 323 winner: JENNIFER & ADRIAN TURNER

ACROSS: 5 Callow 8 Rat-arsed 10 Screwing 11 Titbit 12 Gordon Brown 15 Touch up 16 Cantata 19 Lloyd George 22 Skimpy 24 Button up 25 Alhambra 26 Spliff.

DOWN: 1 Allergic 2 Dragoon 3 Grotto 4 Gelignite 6 Arch 7 Whip-round 9 Tat 13 Blairites 14 Not likely 17 The polls 18 Lesbian 20 Oompah 21 Bumf 23 Yob.

Yobs

HUSBAND



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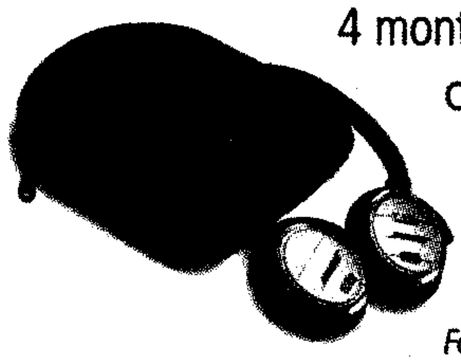

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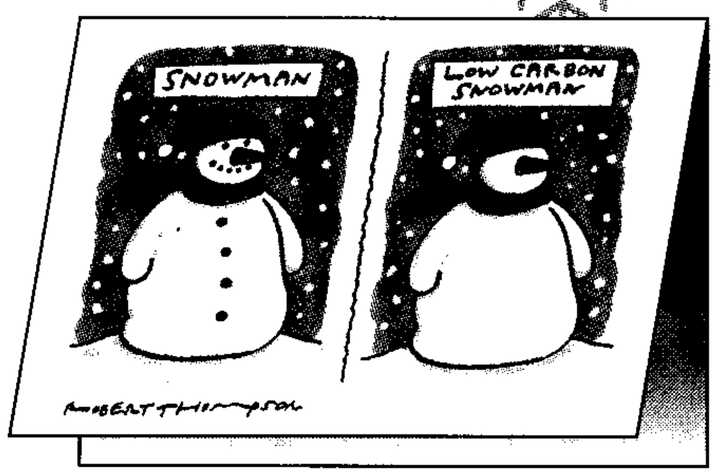

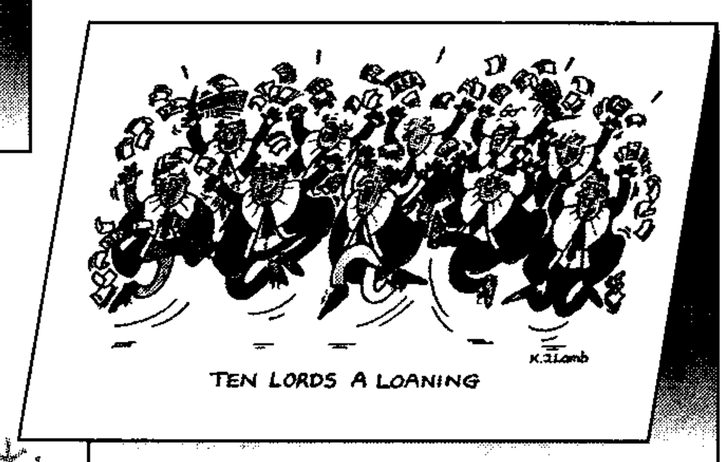

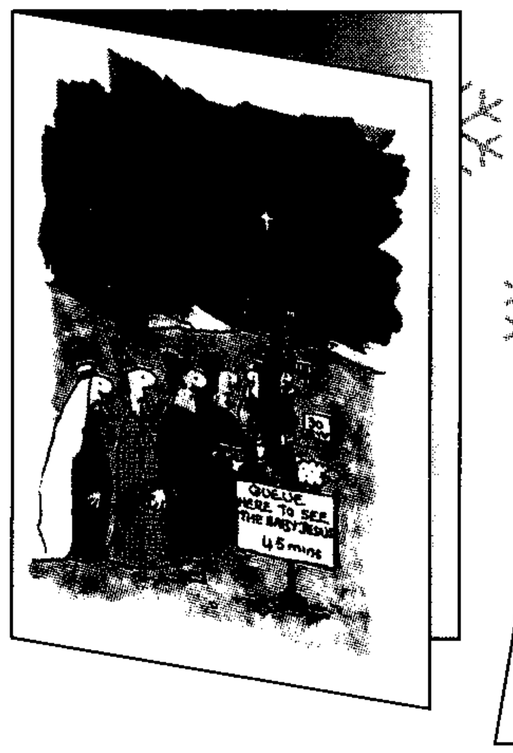

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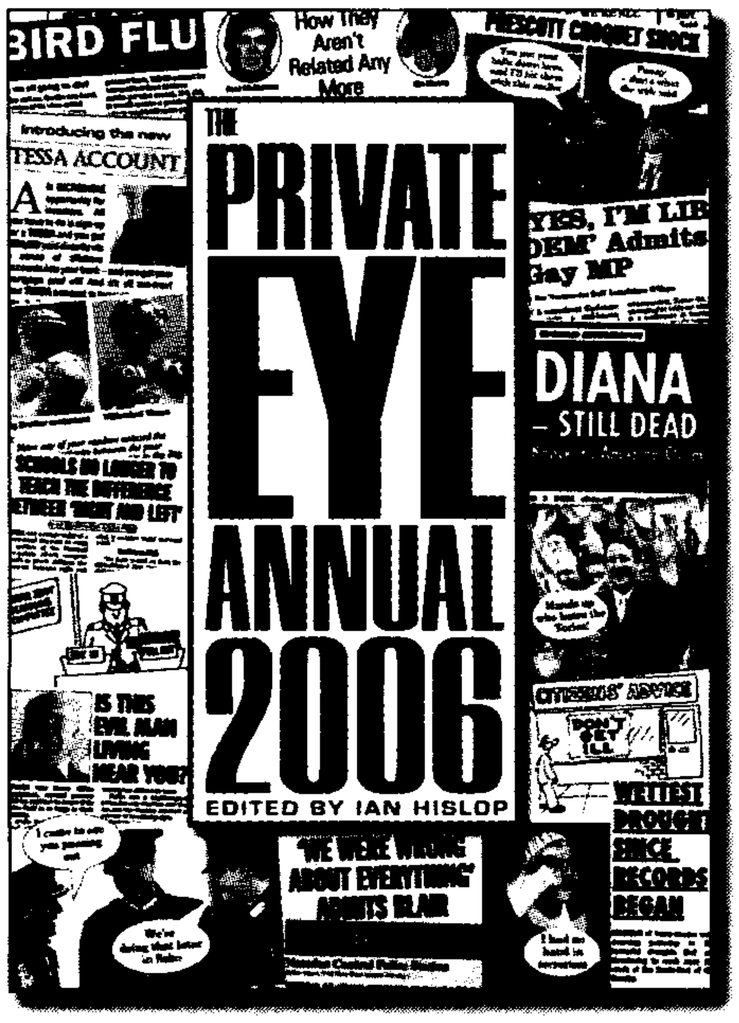
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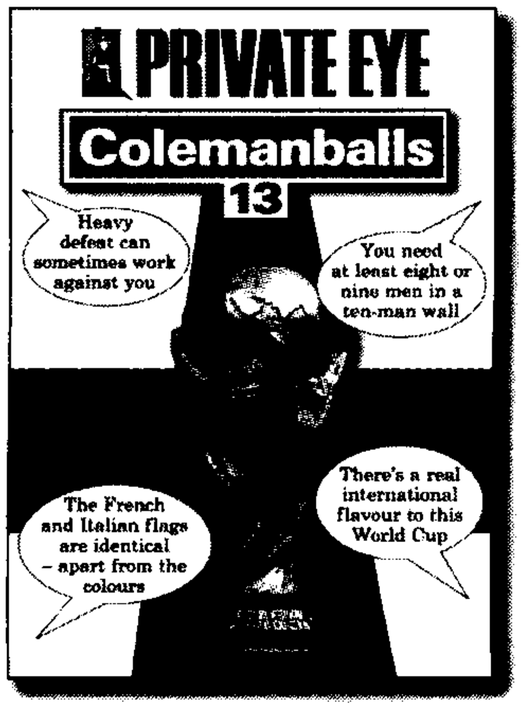
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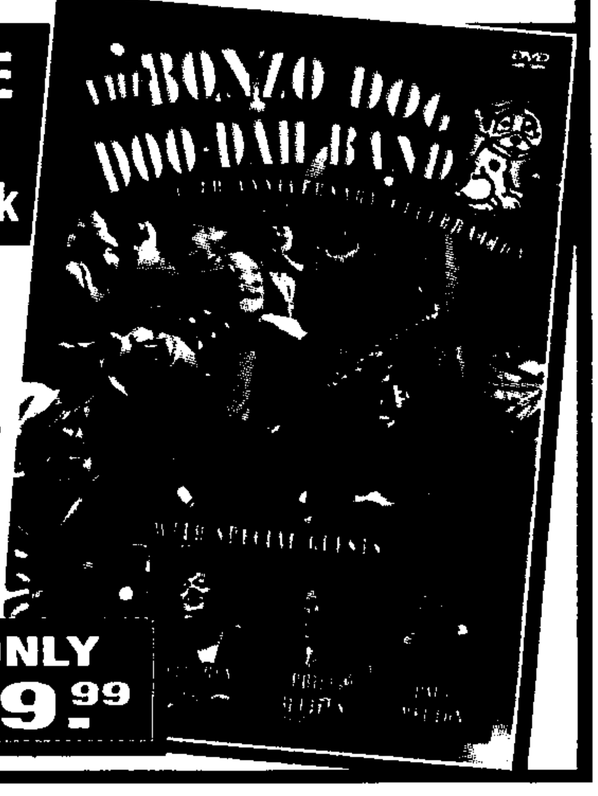

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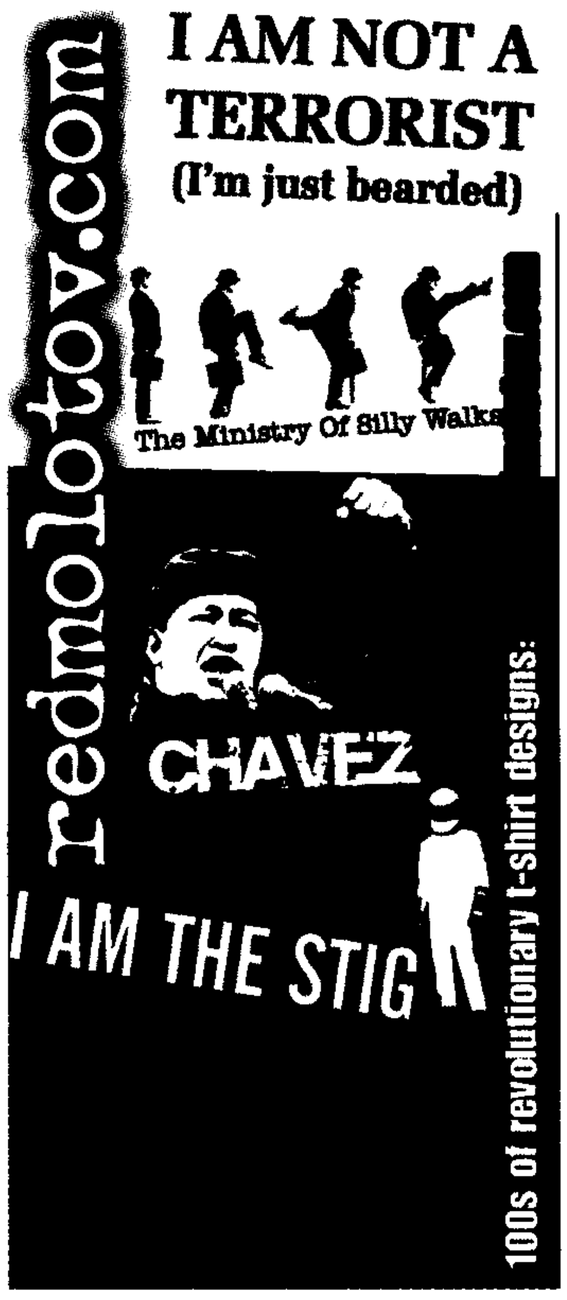

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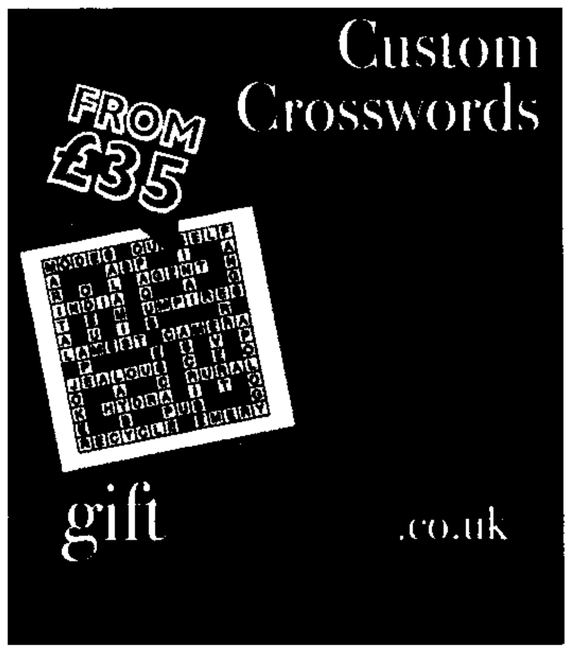

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Yes, ***Raja M. Daswani***'s sartorial missionaries to the badly dressed and overpaying British customer is now bringing him to the UK as often as once a month.

On each visit, Team Daswani takes over hotel suites in all Britain's major cities, so any of us can make an appointment and get the full Hong Kong Monty practically without leaving home.

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The Tailor King Of Hong Kong Comes to the UK

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Indeed, making an appointment with Raja Daswani's team is almost the archetypal no-brainer. Why would any British lover of the classic men's suit NOT?

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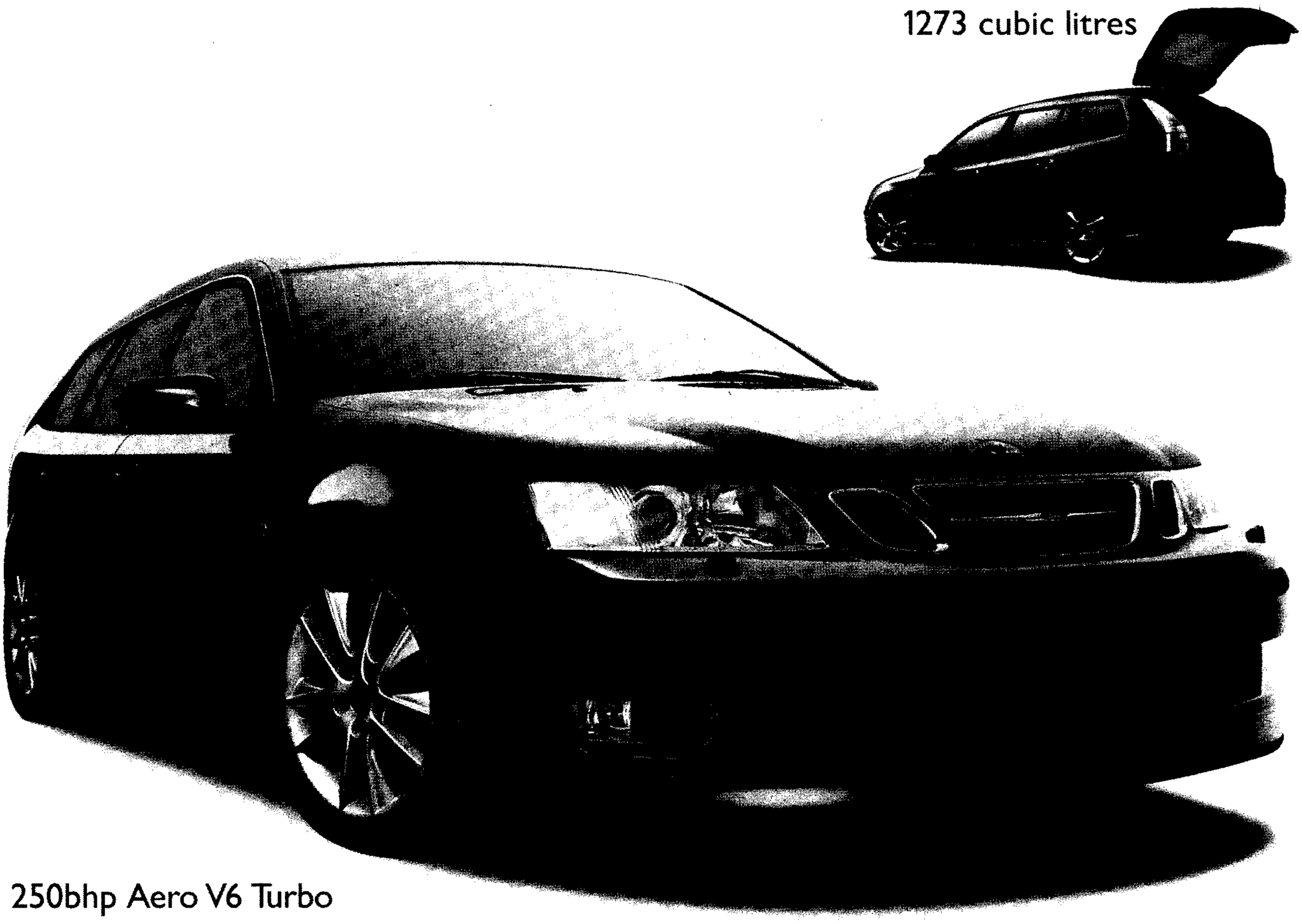

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